ICELAND

W. S. C. RUSSELL

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Mrs. Russell in the Festal Costume of Iceland.
The Author in the Full Dress of the Faroese.

ICELAND

HORSEBACK TOURS IN SAGA LAND

W. S. C. RUSSELL

Illustrated from Photographs
By the Author

35439

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TO MY WIFE
GRACE
WHO TWICE COURAGEOUSLY ACCOMPANIED ME
OVER ICELANDIC TRAILS
AND TWICE
DISPLAYED THE GREATER COURAGE
REMAINING AT HOME
ALONE
THIS SIMPLE RECORD OF OUR WANDERINGS
AFFECTIONATELY
I
DEDICATE

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Bates 1895.

FOREWORD

This Foreword, were it not for the tyrant Custom, might as well be omitted, since a preface is seldom read. Boldly I make my first appearance before the critical public with no excuses to offer and no apology to the reader for adding another volume to the long list of travel books in the English tongue. But I have reasons why I have ventured into print.

First,—Iceland has a fascination for all who know it. Its history, its ancient and modern literature, its legends and folklore, the people with their customs of a thousand years unchanged, the magnificence and grandeur of its scenery, its bird and plant life, its unexcelled opportunities for the student of geology,—all these and many more, are reasons why all the English speaking people should know something of this ancient branch of the Gothic line from which time and circumstance have separated the Angle and the Saxon.

Second,—There is little or nothing in the English language that is authoritative concerning present conditions in Iceland. Henderson, publishing in 1819, and Miss Oswald in 1882, are the only writers in English who have given to the public a fair and appreciative story of Iceland and its people. True it is that there are a few brief works, mainly the accounts of a sojourn of two or possibly three weeks in the country, but they are of necessity limited in scope of observation and lacking in appreciation of real conditions. A character study of the conservative Icelander may not be completed in a single season, one must live with him to know him.

Third,—The kindness with which my numerous lectures on Iceland have been received by the public and the manifest lack of any definite knowledge concerning this country and its people have led me to place before the public this straightforward, simple tale about the Icelanders with some descriptions of their fascinating

land. It is the result of extended travels during the summers of 1909, 1910, 1911 and 1913 through the well known sections and in the out-of-the-way places as well as the unknown portions.

I desire to make the following acknowledgments:— I have both Henderson and Miss Oswald to thank for my first interest and their observations and remarks have ever been in my mind for a comparison with my own experiences. My thanks are due to many Icelanders, to all those who unselfishly opened their doors that I might share their hospitality, more especially to those who in kindness answered my numerous questions, often quite personal, about their countrymen and customs,— in particular do I mention Helgi Zoëga, who has been untiring in furnishing ponies, provisions and sound advice; Steffán Steffánson, who has written many lengthy letters in answer to inquiries; Ólafur Eyvindsson, my friend and trusty guide, whose name frequently occurs in these pages and Dr. Geir T. Zoëga, First Master of the Latin School at Reykjavik, for his advice and council. Finally, I acknowledge my indebtedness to her, to whom this volume is dedicated, for her kindly criticism of these pages while in progress of composition and for the final reading and examination of proofs.

Sir Walter Scott has said in reference to one of his poetical works:—

> "* * * , though scarce my skill command
> Some feeble echoing of thine earlier lay,
> Though harsh and faint and soon to die away,—
> * * *
> Yet if one heart throb higher at its sway,
> The wizard note has not been touched in vain."

And so I say,—if one person acquires an interest in Iceland and its noble people, its history and its ancient tales,—this labor has not been in vain.

Springfield, Massachusetts,
February, 1914.

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CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL

Atossa. And who is set over them as a shepherd of the flock, and is master of the army?
Chorus.—They call themselves the slaves of no man, nor the subjects either.

—*Aeschylus.*

HISTORICALLY, Iceland is unique. Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Mexico,—each has a prehistoric period of human habitation, when man loved and hated, and competed with the brutes for existence. He fashioned his instruments from stone and made self-preservation his first and only law. A sturdy race, little removed from the highest brutes, filled with animal vigor and endowed with brute passions, held all known lands in prehistoric time. Step by step, cycle upon cycle, brute force submitted to reason; culture and refinement, mental acquisition and spiritual attainment characterized an evolutionary race of human beings in which each developing cycle was founded upon the decadence of the prehistoric.

Not so with Iceland. A myriad centuries the Atlantic had rolled its billows against these basalt cliffs, the Arctic packed its ice upon these shores, the beetling mountains cast their rugged outlines upon the quiet fiords, the great Plutonic candles flamed in the Arctic air and guttered the land again and again with scorching streams of molten rock. The seal basked in the sunshine of the lengthened summer, the salmon sported in the glacial streams and millions of birds congregated on the lofty cliffs. All life was blissfully ignorant of its great enemy, man.

There are no prehistoric conditions in Iceland.

The men who settled Iceland were neither serf nor savage. They were men of might and power, fearless and of high birth and of the highest mental capacity in the ancient days of Norway. The cause of their emigration is related by Snorri in *Heimskringla*. Halfdan, the Black, was one of the petty kings of Norway. At his death, he left his realm to Harald, a child of ten years, known in history as The Fair Haired.* It is to the influence of a high-minded woman, Gyda, daughter of Eric, King of Hordaland, that the settlement of Iceland by the nobles of Scandinavia is due. Harald sent his messengers to Gyda with the request that she become his wife. To their demand she replied,—

"I will not waste my maidenhood for the taking to husband of a king who has no more realm to rule over than a few folks. Marvelous it seems to me that there be no king minded to make Norway his own and be sole lord thereof in such wise as Gorm of Denmark or Eric of Upsala have done."

Her reply in no way angered Harald. On the contrary he praised her high spirit and said,—

"For she has brought to my mind that matter which it now seems to me wondrous I have not had in my mind before."

He then made the following oath,—

"This oath I make fast, and swear before that God who made me and who rules over all things, that nevermore will I cut my hair or comb it, till I have gotten to me all Norway, with the scat thereof and the dues, and all rule thereover, or else I will die rather."

After years of strenuous warfare he brought all Norway under his rule, wedded Gyda and held a feast. Snorri completes the story as follows,—

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*See The Story of Harald Hairfair, Saga Library, Vol. III.

"So King Harald took a bath, and then he let his hair be combed, and then Earl Rognavald sheared it. And heretofore it had been uncombed and unshorn for ten winters. Aforetime he had been called Shock-head, but now Earl Rognavald gave him a by-name and called him Harald Fair Haired, and all said who saw him that he was most soothly named, for he had both plenteous hair and goodly."

Harald lived from 860 to 933 A. D. He introduced that new doctrine of middle Europe that made the people the king's retainers at all times and not on special occasions. It was a centralization and consolidation of power and royal authority. It laid taxes upon all the lands and interfered with what the people had ever held as their vested rights. It enabled the monarch to meddle with the holdings of his people and aimed to cement the entire country into one kingdom of power through a central head rather than to permit the existence of several petty realms, each presided over by a Jarl who was jealous of his more powerful neighbors. To the lesser rulers the course of Harald was tyrannical, a curse upon their freedom, a blight upon their ambition. As we view the situation from the distance of ten centuries, it was a step in the progress of the nations that was to result in a blessing through the introduction of Christianity and the ultimate progress of civilization. The freemen resisted as long as they could; beaten again and again they gathered their waning strength and renewed the desperate struggle, but to no purpose. One by one the freeholders came under Harald's dominion. Many withdrew from the scene of strife, forsook the land of their birth, preferring exile with their accustomed liberties to vassalage under conditions, where, as they deemed, no free-born man would care to live.

We now read of them in many lands. France, Italy,

Spain,—each in turn feels the fury of the wrath of the fair-haired warriors of the north. A century later, we behold these restless wanderers victorious in the streets of Byzantium. They check their foes from whatever source they come, never give quarter and swiftly ride to victory, be it on their spirited chargers or in their high-prowed seahorses. In Sicily, Asia, the shores of the Black Sea, in Greece, in northern Africa, no matter where, the stoutest champions of the Moslem or the less valiant warriors of the declining Roman Empire, all feel the force of the northern blast and succumb to the prowess of the Northmen. Wherever they go they leave their mark, and to this day the arsenal of Venice is scored with runes which boast the triumphs of the Vikings.

Of all their wanderings the islands "west-over-the-sea" were their chosen field for conquest. For centuries the coast and river hamlets of England, Scotland and Ireland were in constant dread of their bloody depredations. Their blows were quickly struck. Whence they came the Briton did not know. Swift as the hawk upon the sparrow, they swept down upon some quiet, industrious hamlet with merciless weapon in hand. Fire, pillage and slaughter followed in their wake. They plundered home and sanctuary, tossed in sport the screaming children on their pikes, sent their mothers to shame and serfdom, and left the erstwhile peaceful Briton to quench the ebbing stream of life in the smouldering embers of his former home.

Ireland, where a civilization, greater than we shall ever know, was crumbling, lured them to mingle in the strife between its petty lords, from which the Vikings always issued with the lion's share of the spoil and glory. Scotland, and its adjacent islands, offered tempting chances for swift descent upon unprotected hamlets; and in the hours of their rest or preparation for a new

onslaught, its channels afforded them protection and opportunity to refit their ships. The blow struck and they were away with seahorse laden to the water's edge, seeking the security of the Orkneys, the Shetlands and the distant lava peaks of Faroe. These island groups ultimately became the homes of those who dared not return to Norway or had become too aged to mingle longer in the robbery of Europe. From these islands the self-exiled Northmen sailed forth to assist now one faction of England, Scotland and Ireland, and now another, and even vented their spite by continued bold and dastardly forays upon the domains of Harald.

In 860 Naddodd, a Faroe Viking, left his native Isles and was driven by contrary winds deep into the stormy waters of the north. For days no land was visible, and the anxious eye beheld only the boundless waste of waters shrouded in impenetrable fogs, and the occasional glimpses were only of the rolling, drift-strewn sea ever beyond. At length, the mists were lifted, and the plucky mariner beheld the snow-capped peaks of Iceland. A landing was effected but Naddodd found no traces of human beings, and in his deep disgust he christened the newly discovered country Snaeland, immediately taking his departure.

In 864 Gardar, a Swedish Viking, in attempting to reach the Hebrides, was driven by adverse winds, as Naddodd had been, and at length reached Iceland. He explored the coast quite thoroughly and was the first to circumnavigate it. He built a house on the shore of *Skjalfandifjörðr,* the present cite of *Húsavik,* "house-by-the-creek." Hoping to affix his name to the country, he rechristened it Gardar's Holm. On his return to the Hebrides he gave an enthusiastic account of his voyage and discoveries.

This story so influenced Floki Vilgerdarson, a famous old Viking, that he resolved at once to settle in the new

country. Floki, trusting to the flight of ravens, took three of these sable birds of omen as his pilots. When a little beyond the Faroe Islands, he liberated one bird which immediately returned to the land. Some days later a second was set free, whereupon it arose, circled about the ship and returned to its cage. Later the third was liberated. This bird flew to the northwest, and piloted Floki to Iceland. On entering a great bay, bounded on the right by a lofty mountain and on the left by a rugged promontory, Faxa, one of his companions, called the attention of Floki to the fact that such prominent physical features must mark a land of vast expansion and enormous riches. So flattered was Floki that the bay was immediately christened *Faxafjörðr,* its present name. A colony was founded on a small inlet which in honor of their feathered pilot was named *Hrafnarfjörðr,* "Raven's fiord." Proper precaution was not taken for the severe winter that followed, and during the second year the few survivors returned to Faroe in disgust and gave to this inhospitable land the chilly name of *Iceland.*

Among the first of the high-born Jarls of Norway to leave his native land was Ingölfr Arnarson, accompained by his foster brother, Hjörleifr. Many of his friends had gone to ravage France, others went to England, where Alfred was beginning his eventful reign and still others remained in Norway to await the reports from Ingölfr in Iceland. This was in 874, and recalling accounts of Gardar, they set sail with high hopes. Ingölfr took with him the pillars of the high seat of his ancestral hall and when he came in sight of the icy domes of the *Öraefa Jökull* he cast the pillars into the sea and vowed that upon whatever coast they drifted, there would be found his colony. How many a traveller in modern days has sailed those same waters with the story of Ingölfr fresh in mind and gazed up to

these towering cliffs, crowned with pristine ice and decorated with countless waterfalls glittering in the Arctic sun!

A violent storm arose which separated him from his sacred relics and forced him to land upon a long, steep headland just under the *Öraefa.* To this day the promontory bears the name of *Ingölfshöfði.* A still bolder headland about seventy miles to the west bears the name of his kinsman, *Hjörleifshöfði.* Hjörleifr was not only a sea-rover, a Viking, but he disdained to worship the gods of his race. He set his Irish slaves to tilling the land. They slew him and fled to the adjacent islands, since called *Vestmannaeyjar,* or the "Westmen Isles," for the Irish were then known as the Westmen.

Ingölfr pursued the slaves and slew them all. With the fate of his brother in mind, who had refused to honor the gods, Ingölfr searched vigorously for his drifted pillars and after three years found them on a lava-strewn fiord towards the west. A stream ran down into the channed from a boiling spring, the steam of which was visible for some distance. Here Ingölfr, true to his vow, established his colony and called it *Reykjavik,* "Smoking Creek." One of his followers complained of the location as follows,—

"Ill we did in passing the good lands to settle on this promontory."

Many people have since agreed with him that *Reykjavik* was an unfortunate place for a settlement and a capital. Destiny has proved too strong for reason.

Following these pioneers, came a steady stream of chiefs and thralls until an event in Norway changed the even flow of emigration into a mad rush for the new lands in the lonely ocean. Among the sea-wolves whose lair was in the Shetlands and the Orkneys were many

Vikings who were not content to ravage England, France and more distant shores, but they turned to Norway to vent their spite upon the hated Harald. The old fire was not quenched in the blood of Norway's King. In 880 he came with a great host, bearing fire and sword, determined to utterly rout the Vikings and all their followers from their island fastnesses. He followed his foes into creek and over cliff, wherever sailor could go or landsman climb, from Orkney south to the Isle of Man he put them utterly to rout and freed forever his native lands from the pirates west-over-the-sea.

There was but one place left in the then known world, whence these liberty-loving, wild and dauntless men, driven from their haunts, could go. Harald had taught the lesson most thoroughly; his foes were too weak to cope with him longer. This was also a blessing to the struggling Saxon kingdoms in England. Thus the Vikings fled to the fire-born island in the north Atlantic, with many a southern kinsman and many an Irish bride.

Auth, daughter of Kettil the Flatnose, the queen of Olaf the White, King of Dublin, went to Iceland in 889, as related in the *Erybyggja Saga*. She was a woman of considerable wealth and a Christian. With her sister Thorun, she settled in *Hvamn*. If we accept the account of Dicuilus, an Irish monk who wrote in 829 that some of his Culdee brethren, whom the Vikings called "Papar," visited Iceland to secure retirement like other anchorites, these two women were the first followers of the Cross in the country. In 890 the women moved from the *Breiðifjörðr* to *Eyjafjörðr*. In 1890 the Icelanders celebrated the thousandth anniversary of the landing of the first Christians.

We are apt to picture the Viking as a rover of the sea, making his war-ship fast to that of his enemy and

dealing skull-splitting strokes in a mighty mêlée, where the shouts of the victor rose high above the clash and clang of spear and battle-axe upon shield and helmet. War was not his occupation nor was the sea his home. When he wearied of the pastoral life he turned to the sea for plunder, excitement and recreation. His wanderings were usually of three years' duration. As he returns from the southern isles or the Mediterranean his galley laden to the water's edge with spoil, let us view him in his real home.

The long ship is beached in a sheltered cove. On the green slope reaching upwards from the shore, stands his dwelling and around it is the *tún* or home field enclosed with a turf covered lava wall just as one may see it to-day in the rural districts of Iceland. If our Viking is a man of wealth and influence he possesses many thralls and owns a grand hall and possibly a temple. In the center of the hall a row of fires flings out a generous warmth while the smoke circles upwards, glaring and spark-sprinkled, through the holes in the roof. In the center of the long wall is the high seat or place of honor, its lofty pillars deeply carved and crowned with images of Thor, Odin and Frigga. Upon the cushioned seat sits the returning hero, his garments bound with plates of gold and his sword, "Fire-of-the-Sea-King," in a jewelled scabbard by his side. A collar of engraved gold encircles his neck and his cloak is edged with cloth of gold. On a raised seat at one end of the hall sits his wife surrounded by her servants, her white head dress held with a coronet of gold mingles with her flowing hair falling freely upon her shoulders and over her cloak of royal blue. Her crimson gown from the far East is girdled with golden ornaments and from her wrist hang her keys and well filled purse.

Long rows of benches are occupied with friends and

kinsmen who have come to the feast to welcome the returning hero, who is giving a great banquet in celebration of his victories and his safe return. The walls, deeply carved with the stories of many conflicts in the southern waters, are hung with trophies, shields and weapons. The dancing firelight plays upon their burnished surfaces. In the fitful light the house carles glide about, bearing to the benches huge joints of roasted beef and horse-flesh and replenishing the stoups with sparkling mead. During the feast the scald relates in impromptu chant with many a jest the story of the exploits of the hero.

"Toil-mighty leader ruled
Westward the most of war-hosts;
Sea's mare sped 'neath the lord king
Unto the English lea-land.
The fight-glad king let keel rest,
And winter-long there bided;
No better king there strideth
From out of Vimur's falcon."

Translation of Wm. Morris.

The story of the life of the early Icelander is well told in the introduction of the *Burnt Njal* by Sir George W. Dasent from which I quote the following:—

"From the cradle to the tomb the life of the Icelandic chief fetters our attention by its poetry of will and passion, by its fierce, untamed energy, by its patient endurance, by its undaunted heroism. In Iceland in the tenth century it was only healthy children that were allowed to live. As soon as it was born the infant was laid upon the bare ground, until the father came and looked at it, heard and saw that it was strong in lung and limb, its fate hung in the balance. That danger over, it was duly washed, signed with the Thunderer's holy hammer, the symbol of all manliness and strength, and solemnly received into the family as the faithful

champion of the ancient gods. After the child was named, he was often put out to foster with some neighbor, and there he grew up with the children of the house, and contracted those friendships and affections which were reckoned more binding than the ties of blood. A man was of age as soon as he was fit to do a man's work, as soon as he could brandish his father's sword and bend his bow."

"But for incapacity that age had no mercy. Society required an earnest and pledge from the man himself that he was worth something."

"Place, King!" cries a new guest to a king of Norway.

"Place? Find a place for *yourself!* Turn out one of my thanes, if you can. If you can not, you must sit on the footstool."

"And so these savages spread themselves over the world to prove their natural nobility. In Byzantium they are the leaders of the Greek Emperor's body guard. From France they tear away her fairest provinces. In England they are bosom friends of such kings as Athelstane, and the sworn foes of Ethelred the Unready. From Iceland as a base they push on to Greenland, and colonize it; nay, they discover America in those half-decked barks."

"All this they do in the firm faith that the eyes of the gods are upon them. Theirs was, in truth, a simple creed; to do something and to do it well, so that it might last as long as the world lasted. They were superstitious, that is, they believed in a false religion; but then they believed in it, which is more than all the professors of the true religion can say. They were proud; but humility is a plant of Christian soil. They believed in luck; this, too, is a belief which a more enlightened age has hardly shaken off. They were revengeful; but revenge was the most sacred duty of a

society, which knew no voice more awful and impressive than that of a brother's blood calling from the earth."

"Nor let it be supposed that beneath these tall trees of the forest, growth of emotions did not thrive, which are the crown and joy of everyday life."

" 'Weep not for me,' says the dying warrior to his wife, 'lest those hot tears should scald my bosom and spoil my rest.' "

" 'I was given young to my husband,' says a faithful wife, 'and then I promised to live and die with him,' and this she sings when the house is blazing over their heads, and the foes that surround it offer to let her escape."

"The Icelanders were the bravest warriors, the boldest sailors, and the most obstinate heathen; but they were the best husbands, the tenderest fathers, and the firmest friends of their day."

Steadily the stream of the Northmen poured into Iceland until in sixty years from the coming of Ingölfr the population numbered over sixty thousand. So much land was taken by the first-comers that an agreement was made by which all those who came later could take only as much land as they could encompass by fire in a day. This was done by building a huge fire in the center of the location, whence the claimant travelled in a circle as far away from the fire as he could see the smoke.

They brought with them the customs of Norway and its worship of the northern gods. Neighbors gathered in the *hústhing,* the freeholders in the *móthing* and the nation in the *althing.* While great reverence was paid to their gods, who were high ideals of what the people aimed to become, yet their system reveals the presence of an *unknown god,* indistinct, shadowy and undefined, before whom even Odin, father of the gods, himself

must bow. After the diversified life of agriculture and pillage was over, when the last feast had been given and the last war-cry uttered, after Valhalla had received the hero, there was still a lingering suspicion of something yet beyond.

Christianity was forced upon the Norwegians by Olaf Tryggvason and Olaf the Holy. During the rule of the former, Thangbrand preached "Christ's law" in Iceland among the Eastfirthers, and in the *Burnt Njál* in this connection we read:—

"Hall let himself be christened and all his household and many other chieftans also; notwithstanding there were many more who gainsaid him. Thangbrand abode three winters in Iceland and was the bane of three men or ever he departed thence."

When Icelanders journeyed to Norway, Olaf gave them their choice between taking christening or imprisonment. Among the prisoners were Hjallti and Gizur the White, the latter a prominent character in the *Burnt Njál*. They agreed to go to Iceland and preach the new faith if Olaf would release the prisoners. In the year 1000 they went to the Althing at *Thingvellir*. During a stormy debate a runner came from the *Ölfusá* stating that a stream of lava was overflowing the homesteads. The heathen men cried out,—

"No wonder that the gods are wroth at such speakers as we have heard!"

Then Snorri the priest said,—

"At what then were the gods wroth when *this* lava was molten and ran over the spot on which we now stand?"

They could not answer him.

The following law was then passed,—

"This is the beginning of our laws; that all men shall be Christian here in the land, and believe in one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, but leave

off all idol-worship, not expose children to perish, and not eat horseflesh. It shall be outlawry if such things are proved openly against any man; but if these things are done by stealth, then it shall be blameless."

The last clause of this law disappeared in a short time and shows the growing hold of the new faith upon the heathen. At first, it was a difficult task to induce the Icelander to be baptized. The difficulty was removed by the agreement that the warm springs should be used as fonts. We may infer from this incident that the rite as administered by King Olaf and his followers was that of immersion. A few churches were built and we read that Snorri the priest erected one at *Holyfell.* Says the *Eyrbyggja Saga,*—

"This whetted men much to the building of churches, that it was promised them by the teachers that a man should have welcome place for as many men in the Kingdom of Heaven as might stand in any church that he let build."

We do not see in this the softening influences of the Christ-life, forgiveness and salvation; it is rather the mediaeval conquest of the Church, which satisfied itself with the symbol of the cross and the rite of holy water. Christianity in this form was powerless to subdue the stirring passions of alienated families, who had long been trained to pay homage to such a god as Odin and to whom the blood-feud was just as sacred as the cross. Thus we see the spears and battle axes, blazoned with the emblem of Christianity, returning from foreign conquests to stain themselves anew in homicidal strife. This very strife gave birth to Icelandic letters.

During the long winter nights the nobles gave lengthened banquets in their halls as their ancestors had aforetime done in Scandinavia. During the progress of the feast the scalds recounted the heroic deeds of their mas-

ters. In the fitful glare of the firelight the joyous mead-bowl circled and dissolved in song and cheer the sternness of the north. Here were fought again the terrible Heath Slayings. Here were recounted the deeds of Howard the Halt, the quarrels of the Ere-Dwellers and the stirring scenes of the Water Dale. The returning Viking related his exploits in distant and fairer lands. The legends and folk-lore, through repetition, were clothed with choicer phrasing. These are vivid pictures of the ancient days, simple, straightforward tales that bear the stamp of truth and reveal the germ of a splendid dramatic power.

With the introduction of Christianity came the use of letters. The scalds and story tellers hastened to avail themselves of this method to place in rhyme and prose the idyls, the mythology and the history of the race. Every strong and original race has vented its emotions in literature. The Iliad and Odyssey express the life of the plastic period of the Greek; the Aeneid does the same for the Roman. Through the force of the example set us by our schools, we turn to the study of Greek and Latin, forgetful of our own rich expression of the past or ignorant of its existence. Our early tongue had its great epics. Presumption, it may be, to compare them with the Iliad, but of great merit nevertheless. Its chronicles were replete with the doings of the people. This literature possesses a mythology that, in its purity and noble sentiments, in its heroism and spiritual aspirations, was never equalled.

Thus came into existence the Eddas and Sagas. Mr. York Powell says that the earliest poets were a mixture of Norwegian and Irish. And Howell adds,—

"Hence the Keltic grace that softened down the Gothic strength." The Eddas relate the earliest mythology, the ancient Scandinavian religion. The first Eddas were written by Saemundr the Wise in poetic

form and the later Eddas were put into beautiful prose by Snorri Sturlason at *Reykholt*. The Landnamabók, the doomsday book of Iceland, was written by several hands but chiefly by Ari the Wise. The names and homes of all the early settlers are given. Snorri Sturlason also wrote the Heimskringla, "round world." In it we read not only the history of Iceland from the beginning but of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland and England. The list of Sagas is long and each has a special interest. First of all is the *Njála,* so beautifully translated by Dr. George Dasent, of which he says,—

"It bears away the palm for truthfulness and beauty."

In the middle of the eleventh century the Icelandic feuds had reached the point where all the great families were weary of bloodshed and in the year 1262 they surrendered their freedom to Hakon, King of Norway. The people still held their own laws and met as customary at the Althing. Says Howell,—

"But with the freedom passed the fruits of an heroic age. The stream of spoil from foreign lands had ceased to flow. The curb upon the chieftain checked the scald; copying took the place of writing, and then the land began to live upon the memories of the past."

The century before the Reformation was one of sadness, poverty and misery for Iceland. In 1360 Denmark took possession of Norway and Iceland. In 1420 the Black Death visited the little nation and took for toll two thirds of its population. In the fourteenth century the Reformation which was sweeping Europe reached Iceland, the gospel was given to the people and in 1584 the first complete Bible was produced in Icelandic by Bishop Guthbrandr Thorlaksson. With the reformation, also came a revival of letters. In 1602 Denmark gave to a Copenhagen company a monopoly of all Icelandic trade. This wrought an evil that was not remedied until 1874, the effects of which are still

experienced by the people. In the seventeenth century, pirates from England, France and Barbary wrought great havoc upon the unprotected coasts and carried away hundreds of captives. Calamities came rapidly. In 1707 the small pox claimed a toll of eighteen thousand people. Fifty years later half a million sheep and nearly all the cattle died of pestilence and as a result famine stalked throughout the land. In 1783 a volcanic eruption destroyed thirteen hundred people, many cattle, twenty thousand horses and one hundred and thirty thousand sheep. The heroic nation had reached the limit of its endurance and Denmark relented. In 1800 the Althing which had met in the sunken plain of *Thingvellir* for over nine hundred years left the Lögberg to history and removed to *Reykjavik* to sit beneath a roof. Then arose the Icelandic patriot, Jon Sigurðsson, and through his labors Iceland received from the hands of the King of Denmark, at the celebration of its one thousandth anniversary, its constitution and its practical freedom.

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CHAPTER II

THE LURE

"Oh *Frey* in the north lands,
Thou sweetest of powers,
Thy breath on the mountains
Turns ice into flowers.
Thy smile on the meadows
Is life to the fold,
Thy touch on the maid's hair
Turns flaxen to gold."

—*Anon.*

WHY do you choose Iceland for a vacation? I would go to a more interesting place, if I were you.

This question has been asked so many times and similar comments have followed so often before I could answer the question that I write my answer here, as an inducement to you, who can not take the long journey with me literally, to follow me in imagination through these pages and live with me for a few brief hours in that far off land of fascination.

The people interest me. The country was settled, not by serf nor servant. The grand old warriors of the viking period, who overran in quick succession the British Isles, ravaged the coast of France, swept through the Mediterranean and even penetrated to Constantinople, and wherever they went subdued and triumphed, —these are the men who, once the lords and petty kings of ancient Norway, scorning to bend the knee to Harald, chose unknown dangers in a strange and distant land, and going there sat down amidst the frosts and volcanoes of Iceland to relate the story of their deeds. From this virile race are the modern Icelanders descended. They are a kindly, honest and hospitable

race; kind to each other and to the stranger within their borders, hospitable with a hospitality which is almost unknown in our selfish race, honest beyond all question.

The literature fascinates me. The language, now dead in its ancient Norse valleys, is a living speech in Iceland. Its children read its ancient sagas, centuries upon centuries old, as understandingly as their weekly newspapers. It is just as if some long lost island of the Aegian still held in all its ancient purity the musical accent of the Homeric age, or, as if some forgotten valley in the Italian Alps resounded with the rhetoric of Cicero or vibrated to the tunes of Horace.

The scenery, the geology, has a charm unknown in other lands. It is a country fresh from the crucible of nature. Here one views a continent in the making, beholds the mighty upheavals from the nether abyss, sees how nature, as if ashamed of her rough work, planes with her league-long blades of ice the basaltic ridges and glassy peaks. The traveller beholds a country full of lakes and rivers, and waterfalls the largest in Europe, but a country without any system of mountain chains and drainage to conform to the laws laid down by the physiographer. Mountains there are in abundance and lofty ones, but scattered hither and yon at the strange caprice of Pluto. Rivers, both the delight and the vexation of the traveller, inspiring in the grandeur and unharnessed freedom of their mighty canyons, vexing when they obstruct his passage, and he must lift his hat in trust to swim their white currents or else forbare the distant shore. In stern defiance of obstacles the traveller journeys through a roadless country where a thousand years since the progenitors of his diminutive steed first bore their valiant masters. There are miles of meadows smiling in the lengthened summer day and freely sprinkled with a rich and beautiful flora;

there are quaking bogs to cross and quicksands, where the judgment of his pony surpasses his rider's wisdom; there are wastes of wind driven sand without a scrap of vegetation to enliven the scene; there are mountain ranges to be crossed, perhaps where no one ever pressed the lava; there are beautiful valleys, rich with flocks and herds and alive with horses; there are areas of smoking lands, ill-smelling and sizzling fumaroles, boiling springs and blue-black mud cauldrons which vomit their horrid contents with a sickening gasp; lakes and ponds innumerable, where live unmolested a myraid waterfowl, where flowers bloom in a profusion often rare in more southern climes.

The homes are simple, humble and pastoral. An ancient house of turf and stone, an enclosed mowing patch, the sheep folds and the byre, a scanty garden where a few hardy vegetables rejoice in the long, long day. Even the endless day has its charm, the nearly continuous sunshine and the fleecy clouds in the bluest of blue skies, the lights and shadows on lake and mountain, the extreme clearness of the atmosphere, clear to the point of great deception to the inexperienced,—the colors, I did not forget them, nor will one having seen the richest of nature's colors in these grand old volcanic piles with streaks of emerald and patches of brown, gray, yellow, red and crimson all washed and blended with the fan-like brush of melting snow, ever forget.

Why do I go to Iceland? Because the people appeal, the old stories of heroic deeds stir the sluggish blood of city life, and the thought of being foot-loose and carefree throughout its lingering summer day to roam at will its mountain vales and smiling meadows impells me.

CHAPTER III

THE WAY

"Here rise no groves, and here no gardens blow,
Here even the hardy heath scarce dares to grow;
But rocks on rocks, in mist and storm arrayed,
Stretch far to sea their giant colonade,
With many a cavern seamed, * * *."

—*Scott.*

ICELAND is an island in the north Atlantic just east of Greenland. There is no boat service between it and America. The American must embark either from Copenhagen or from Leith. The Copenhagen boats, the mail boats of *Det Forenede Dampskibs-Selskab,* always call at Leith and it is by this line and from Leith that we have always sailed for Iceland.

We went on board the *Laura* at the Albert Dock in the afternoon of the eighth of July 1909, and steamed out through the Firth of Forth. At last, after 3000 miles of ocean travel we were *en route* for Iceland. The little boat was crowded to overflowing and two English ladies slept in the starboard boat as it hung from the davits. Among the passengers there were eleven different nationalities. The *Laura* looked diminutive compared with the transatlantic liner from which we had disembarked but three days previously. We viewed her not without some doubt as to her behavior in the stormy waters of the north. She was an ancient boat, one could tell that at a glance as well as by another sense, but she was staunch. When the skipper told me that the display of bunting from peak to peak was in commemoration of her two hundredth consecutive trip to Iceland, I said to my wife,—

"The boat is all right, it all rests with the skipper." This proved to be prophetic. Captain Aasberg took us safely through the stormiest passage we have experienced in these waters and landed us all safely as he had done with so many passengers previously. On the return he resigned and the owners turned the *Laura* over to a new skipper. Whether she was disobedient to her new master or not, I can not say, but on his first trip she climbed the lava ridges north of Iceland and her ribs are still grinding in the sluiceways. Better a frail boat and a staunch captain than the converse.

The passage northward is full of interest with such special features to attract the attention as,—the shipping activity of Aberdeen and Peterhead, the North Sea trawlers and the herring fleet, the smaller fishing craft venturing shorter distances from the protection of the great headlands, the grand old promontories of the Pentland Firth and the Skerries, to discuss all of which would shorten our journey in Iceland.

We can not pass the Orkneys without a word of notice. They were the Isles-West-Over-the-Sea of the Vikings. Here they fled at first from the wrath of Harald, here they fitted out their expeditions for all lands, here they recuperated and quarrelled with themselves and the mixed race of the mainland of Scotland. Here was written that great Saga of the northland, the *Orkneyinga Saga,* a stirring tale of Harald, the Earls of Orkney and of Scotland. Passing Kirkwall, the square Norman tower of its ancient cathedral attracts the eye. Pleasing is the crescent city on the quiet bay. How peaceful and how changed from the days of the Vikings! We recall that this is the center of the action in Scott's Pirate, that fine story of much earlier days. On yonder cragg Norna of the Fitful Head uttered her wild incantations, in this same kirk she plotted with the mysterious pirate while those fair fields with the

upland flocks are the same as in the days of Halco and Magnus.

The Old Man of Hoy blends with the cliffs as we pass, the famous Naup Head sinks into the sea and the *Laura* in a smother of fog and drizzle turns confidently towards Faroe. Forty-six hours out from Leith the *Laura* found her old anchorage in *Thorshaven*, the capital of the Faroe Isles. We found it a great relief to go ashore for a few hours to visit the shops of these people. The place and the people are worthy of a special chapter which will follow this one. The passage through the fiords was fortunately made in clear weather and the scenery is impressive.

Lonely and grand in the north Atlantic rise the storm-scarred cliffs of Faroe. They are the stepping stones to Iceland and as such were used as a resting place by the first mariners of these waters.

CHAPTER IV

FAROE

"And still the eye may faint resemblance trace
In the blue eye, tall form, proportion fair,
The limbs athletic, and the long light hair,—
(Such was the mien, as Scald and Minstrel sings,
Of fair-haired Harold, first of Norway's Kings);
But their high deeds to scale these crags confined,
Their only warfare is with wave and wind."

—*Scott.*

CONSIDERING the latitude and its isolation in the north Atlantic, the climate of Faroe is comparatively mild. Fierce storms from the north beat down upon the islands and the heavy sea often surges for days together through these narrow channels making it impossible for boats to pass from shore to shore. Even in calm weather the tide currents often run at ten knots an hour so that it is necessary for the boatman to have an accurate knowledge of the currents in order to make progress. The high peaks are covered with snow frequently throughout the summer, but snow seldom lingers in the valleys over a fortnight even in the winter.

The temperature is low in summer and correspondingly high in winter. Heavy fogs cover the islands during the greater portion of the year and a perfectly clear day is rare. When the sun breaks through the mists, the effect of the shifting clouds, the areas of snow on the upper peaks and the myriads of waterfalls form a magnificent picture.

Seventeen of the islands are inhabited with a population of 16,000 people. The largest island is *Strömö,* Stream, which is twenty-seven miles long. The capital, *Thorshaven,* Harbor-of-Thor, with a population of

8,000 people, is located on the east coast of *Strömö*. These islands belong to Denmark and have two representatives in the Danish Parliament. All local affairs are conducted in the *Lagthing,* Law-Assembly, at *Thorshaven.* The people are exempt from conscription and of nearly all customs, duties and taxes. The members of the *Lagthing* are chosen by ballot for a term of three years. The President is appointed by the Danish King for life. The local taxes are collected by native sheriffs, who canvass their districts four times each year. The sheriffs also have charge of the division and distribution of the captured whales. Lawyers are resident at *Thorshaven* and at no other place in the islands. Criminal and civil cases are tried before a judge and without a jury. All petty cases come before the local sheriff. The head man of each village enforces the sanitary regulations and other local rules. There are no policemen in the islands and crime, unless committed by foreign sailors, usually Scotch fishermen, is extremely rare. The *Faroese* are peaceable and sensitive of any scandal if it passes beyond the borders of their own village. It is the duty of every man to see to it that the law is maintained, and they keep a careful watch of all foreigners when on shore.

There is only one jail in the islands and a Faroeman smilingly declared to me that it was for the sole benefit of the Shetland fishermen. The law permits a prisoner to diet only on bread and water. A man serving a sentence spends three days in jail and then enjoys three days of freedom alternately until the entire term of the confinement is completed. There is no danger of his making an escape.

In *Thorshaven* and in the larger villages there are schools. There is also a Teacher's College in the capital city. The people have local option in educational matters and many prefer to teach their children at

Cutting up Whale Meat at Thorshavn.

Heads of the Bottle Nose Whale.

home. If it is voted to have a school in a given village, then all the children must attend it, the parents must supply a teacher and provide sufficient pasturage for one cow for the use of the teacher, but the government pays the meager salary.

The results of their home education are excellent; the children study for the sake of knowledge. The most simple ones have a good knowledge of history and geography. The law requires that the church services, the village schools and the proceedings of the *Lagthing* be conducted in Danish. On all other occasions the Faroeman uses his own language. They use the Danish only upon compulsion. There is a strong anti-Danish feeling which is kept alive by the supercilious behavior and affected superiority of the resident Danes, who, however, in politeness, integrity and hospitality are inferior to the Faroese. The Danes in Faroe are not to be confounded by the reader with the Danes resident in Denmark.

The people are stoutly built, with fair complexions, usually handsome, mostly short in stature, broad shouldered and rugged, descendants of the ancient Norse Vikings who settled in Faroe prior to the settlement of Iceland. They have kept the race pure. If asked his nationality, the Faroeman proudly replies,—"I am a Faroeman."

The men have a national costume, which is shown in the frontispiece of this volume. This suit I purchased of Peter Arge in *Thorshaven*. I asked him where I could obtain one of these suits and he took me to the little bed room at the top of his house and asked me to try on his best suit. I did it and found that it fitted closely, and so it was in style in *Thorshaven*. He willingly sold it saying that he could make another during the winter when there was no work. A brief description of this costume is not out of place at this point.

It consists of knickerbockers, slashed at the knee and secured with four silver buttons and a broad, double-hinged silver buckle. The waistcoat is scarlet, fastened with six silver buttons. A continuous spray of forget-me-nots, daintily worked with colored silk, extends down each edge of the waistcoat and across the two diminutive pockets. A tightly fitting jersey of home-spun, with twenty-four silver buttons, twelve on a side, is put over the waistcoat and over this, in cold weather, is worn a short heavy jacket fastened with silver buttons of large size. This is used much as we use an overcoat. The cap is of closely woven material in fine stripes of red and blue; it has no visor, is cylindrical in shape and gathered at the top in the form of a rosette, which is pulled down on the right hand side and fastened at the edge of the cap. Thick, homespun stockings of soft wool and sheepskin slippers,—or sometimes a Danish shoe with silver buckles,—fastened around the ankles with red or white cord complete the costume. No,—the Faroeman is not fully "dressed" without his beautifully inlaid knife in a highly ornamented sheath fastened to his belt with a twisted cord. This knife, as well as scores of smiliar knives from Faroe, was made by Mr. Arge, who is expert at inlaying shell, silver and wood. The suit was made in his own family and his daughter embroidered the waistcoat. The Faroese women, like the Icelandic men, have no national costume.

The people are very seclusive. Many families claim descent from the ancient Kings of Norway and Scotland, and will marry only among themselves. They are so clannish that the people on one island rarely marry with those of another island. To illustrate,—A woman born on *Strömö* married a man from *Nalsö*. The result was that she was boycotted by all the *Nalsö* people. Contrary to the dogma of the medical fra-

ternity this inbreeding has not produced extremely abnormal offspring. Mental, moral and physical degeneration has not resulted from this long series of close inbreeding.

The language of the Faroese must be classed as a dialect. Although having the same origin as the Icelandic tongue, it differs strongly in pronunication. In the Viking days the same speech was employed in Norway, Faroe and in Iceland. Icelandic has remained nearly pure but Faroe, being in close contact with Shetland, Orkney and with the numerous fishermen, its language has been much adulterated. Faroe has its Sagas as well as Iceland, Norway and Orkney, but there were no Sagamen or historians as in Iceland. The modern Faroese dialect has been written less than eighty years. The ballads, folklore and traditions are now being reduced to writing by the scholars and many French, English, Danish and Icelandic works have been translated.

The Faroese have escaped the demoralizing influences of the continent and for centuries have lived simply and quietly along the lines of their ancient customs. Their hospitality is generous, their courtesy to strangers extensive, their inborn honesty is perfect. The people, when not engaged in fish curing or in whale dissection, are clean and their homes are models of tidiness. Their centuries of isolation and peaceful living have eradicated every trace of the cruelty, piracy and murderous tendencies of their Viking progenitors. They have some vices,—what nation has none? They lack originality, their ambition and energy is at a low ebb, they take life as a matter of fact and do not worry. They surpass all other people in their love of gossip and in sarcasm. There is a lack of gaiety and a tendency towards melancholy. If climate has any effect upon the spirits of a race, surely the heavy fogs,

that hang over these islands for weeks and saturate everything with chilling moisture, are responsible for the melancholy. The long, dark winters, the continuous roar of ocean through these ancient fiords is also responsible for the mental cast of the race. But, they have a peculiar humor and are fond of joking each other. This is a trait inherited from their Viking ancestors and this trait is strong in Iceland. The people dislike very much to be laughed at or to pose as objects of curiosity before the gaze of the foreigner. It was with the greatest difficulty that I obtained my series of one hundred photographs of these people and their homes.

Conservatism is their prevailing characteristic. Some European method or idea may be better than their own, but they cling to their ancient customs as their bird catchers to the cliffs. They build their houses as did their grandfathers *because* their grandfathers constructed their dwellings after the designs of more remote generations. Birch bark is still imported from Norway to cover the drift-wood rafters and over this is placed a layer of turf where the grass grows throughout the year and the flowers bloom in profusion in the long summer. The ancient wooden weighing beam, the quaint antique iron lamp for train oil, the implements of the forge, the fishing tackle, the boats and their rigging,—all are constructed according to ancestral specifications. Modern ideas are scoffed at, the old ways are the best. The Faroese are happy in their own seclusion and they live in the shadowy paths between the superstitions of ancient Scandinavia and the vigorous, pulsing life of western civilization. They care little for the outside world and its problems. A local newspaper, in spite of the submarine cable, gives only a fourth of a column to news of the outside world; the remainder is filled with gossip which every one

knew before the sheet issued from the press.

The streets of *Thorshaven* are narrow, uneven, crooked and crowded. The houses are built mostly of wood on high stone foundations, the walls are frequently coated with tar and in the summer time festoons of fish are suspended from the gables to dry. Within the home everything is neat and clean, the Norway spruce is sanded, colored by time and untarnished with paint and has become a beautiful chestnut brown.

The people retain some of their ancient superstitions and believe that the result of a day's fishing, or success in bird-netting, will depend upon some chance of minor importance. The *trolls,* underground people of diminutive stature, elves and fairies live largely in the imagination and the folk stories relative to these phantoms have a strong influence upon the children. Where the cliffs rise directly out of the sea, there are many isolated columns, like the "Old Man of Hoy" in Orkney, which have been left standing by erosion of the waves. The water surges around them and they stand erect in the mists, solitary and unpressed by human foot. The Faroese call them the "Fingers of the Norns" and the fishermen hold them in deep superstition. This northern superstition, the control of mortals by unseen powers, has been made use of by Sir Walter Scott in that mysterious character in the *Pirate,* Norna of the Fitful Head.

The people are chiefly occupied in fishing, sheep raising and bird catching. The codfish abound in these cool northern waters, especially on the Faroe Bank. They not only secure enough of them for their own consumption but export large quantities to the Catholic countries of the Mediterranean. As in Labrador and in Iceland, so in Faroe, the fishing is done by the men, while the splitting, cleaning, curing and packing is the work of the women.

The one time in the year when the Faroese are moved from the even tenor of their way is during the whale drive. This is a yearly affair that takes place during the latter part of July or early in August. It is the one great sport of the country and upon its success depends the condition of the larder during the long winter. This is the bottle-nose whale, *Hyperoodon rostratum,* a small species from fifteen to twenty-two feet in length. They frequent the north Atlantic in large schools. The Faroese are constantly on the look out for them and when the whales enter the channels the summons by signals and telephone is rapidly passed from island to island. In an incredibly short time the school is nearly surrounded by the boats of the excited fishermen with harpoons and spears. Because of the great shouting and the closing together of the boats, the whales become frightened and frantically rush to the shore where most of them are stranded, few ever escape. From the boats, from the shore, and in the water, the slender harpoon is hurled with deadly aim. The whale once struck is securely anchored and the harpooner hastens to secure another victim. When the slaughter is over, the heads are cut off and numbered, the bodies cut up and distributed under the direction of the sheriffs and an equitable distribution of the flesh and fat is made according to law. Not only do the people actually present at the whale slaughter receive their portion but all the people in the district receive their just share. The flesh of these whales is similar to dark colored coarse grained beef, but when nicely broiled is a palatable and nutritious dish. The body is enveloped with two to six inches of fat, which has the consistency of hard fat pork. This is salted and used by the people as we use salt pork. The flesh is smoked, dried or salted. Owing to the scarcity of grass the Faroese cows sometimes subsist upon dried whale

meat in the winter and often eat dried fish heads.

The third occupation of the people is bird catching. This is followed by a restricted portion of the population. The great cliffs of Faroe, ranking with the finest in the world, are the homes of myriads of sea birds. Bird catching is an art as well as an occupation and has descended from father to son through many generations. The skua, puffin, guillemot and eider duck are among the more numerous birds. They are taken for their flesh, oil and feathers. Many of the birds are captured in nets similar to a butterfly net, except that the net is flat and spread between two forks at the end of a long pole. I measured one of these nets and found the handle to be eighteen feet long and each of the Y-shaped prongs was six feet. Between the arms of the Y is stretched the net. In use the fowler sits upon a rock and when he sees a puffin flying directly towards him he elevates the net, the bird is clumsy, unable to quickly change his direction and flying into the net becomes entangled. I sat by one of the fowlers in Iceland one day who was working with one of these nets and in thirty minutes he secured forty birds. Often times the record of two or more a minute is made, when the birds are flying well. The puffin burrows in the ground like a rabbit and there rears its young. During the day they haunt the sea, collect small fish and then fly in great companies in long files to their nests.

The fowler is also an expert cragsman and whether he creeps along the narrow shelf hundreds of feet above the sea and works his way from point to point on the overhanging cliffs, or is suspended like a pendulum on a rope four to five hundred feet, he is cool, collected, skillful, and always successful. In fact he is the best cragsman in the world.

There are a few domestic arts that have reached perfection, as far as their purpose is concerned, such

as spinning, weaving, fulling, embroidering, boat-building and metal decorating. The Faroeman is an expert at wood and bone carving and at metal inlaying. My Faroese sheath knife, made by Peter Arge, is a model of skillful construction, deftly inlaid with the mother of pearl and silver. The sheath is of ebony, inlaid with silver in the form of a whale boat, harpoon and fish hooks.

Faroe is the stepping stone to Iceland. I have visited it on seven different occasions, have passed through nearly every one of its numerous channels, wandered through the villages, attended a country auction much like that held in the rural districts of New England, climbed the lower slopes of its hills which overlook the fiords, witnessed the marvelous bird life and learned a little about the quaint inhabitants and my experience has been such that I can cordially recommend these lofty islands as a delightful spot for a summer's holiday. The tourist will be given all necessary assistance and information, whether he desires to paint, fish in the little lakes of the glacial valleys, accompany the fowler in his dangerous occupation upon the cliffs or journey from island to island through the wonderful channels with the fishermen. He will obtain homely but clean and nutritious food, and when the crust of conservatism is broken and the confidence of the host is secured, he will pass many an hour in delightful conversation which will store his mind with quaint anecdotes and ancient myths. He will leave the islands with regret and in after years will sometimes long for the serene and peaceful life of the Faroese, where worry, care and social duties do not intrude and he will count among his warmest friends the stoical Faroese.

With the ever changing mood of sea and sky these isles present a kaleidoscopic picture. The frowning cliffs alive with sea birds, where "clouds on clouds arise,"

the higher pinacles obscured or banded with drifting cloud ribbons, the patches of pristine snow high up in the mountain clefts from which numerous waterfalls leap the cliffs to fall in silver spray upon the sea, the quaintly garbed Faroese swinging like pendulums from the projecting lava to net the birds, or, bobbing in their boats upon the waves, the tiny homes set in a bit of emerald vegetation in an angle of the mountain wall, the changing panorama of sea, cliff and sky as the boat raced with the current through the tortuous channels and turned the last rockspire into the northern ocean and the fading of the mighty headlands in the purple haze of a midnight twilight,—these were the elements of a picture well worth ten thousand miles of travel. Faroe with the quaintness of twelve centuries of isolation dropped below the horizon and the next land to delight the eye was to be Iceland.

I was with the mate on the bridge at five the next morning and as anxious as was *Ingölfr* and his foster brother, *Hjörleifr,* eleven centuries before, to discover what secrets these northern waters held,—when the dim outline of land was seen through the shifting fog. An enthusiastic Dane, an Icelandic maiden and her Swedish lover started the national anthem of Iceland.

"Eldgamla Ísafold,
Ástkaera fósturmold,
Fjallkonan fríð,
Mögum pín muntu kaer,
Meðan lönd gyrðir saer,
Og gumar girnast maer,
Gljár sól á hlíð."

At that time I did not distinguish the Icelandic from the Danish but I knew the tune, *America,* and I mingled the good English words of Dr. Smith with the lisping gutterals of the Scandinavian. Norse and Yankee are

well met in this Icelandic sea and I doff my cap to the descendants of those sturdy mariners who discovered Iceland, Greenland and America before Columbus was born, who Anglicised Celt and Britain and eventually made possible our own dear New England.

The morning vapors are scattered. The ocean is a thing of life. It rolls in all the wild freedom of the north, rich in livid shades of blue and green in the nearer circle of our vision while on the far horizon it is a sparkling amethyst beneath the deeper azure of the bending sky. To the north, the circle is broken by the abrupt basaltic towers of *Ingölfshofði.* Beyond these rise the red and brown fragments of extinct craters, and yet beyond and towering far above them are the glaciated *Jökulls* down whose sides rush mighty torrents to dash in uncounted waterfalls into the impatient sea. It was at this point that the foster brothers cast overboard the temple pillars of *Ingölfr,* who vowed by *Odin,* that upon whatever coast they were cast, there would he found his colony. *Hjörleifr* went to the neighboring islands, the Westmans, where he was soon afterwards murdered by his Irish serfs. *Ingölfr* tarried here for about three years and sent parties along the coast to search for the lost pillars.

This bold promontory is also noted in the Saga of *Burnt Njal* as being the place where Kari, the blood-avenger of Njal was wrecked when returning from his exile. Near here stood the house of Flosi, the life-long enemy of Kari. The incident shows the sacredness of hospitality among these savage people. Kari went boldly to Flosi and asked for succor from the storm. The Burner, in spite of the sworn enmity to Kari, granted his request, welcomed him with a Scandinavian welcome and afterwards they became lifelong friends.

We came close in under the bare black walls of *Eyjafjalla,* Island-Mountain, and gazed up to *Skoga-*

foss, Forest Waterfall, tumbling one hundred and eighty feet of unbroken water into the breakers which boiled with the black volcanic sand. At length we came to *Vestmannaeyjar,* Westman Isles, which, like the fingers of the Norns had been beckoning to us all the morning.

CHAPTER V

VESTMANNAEYJAR

"Here, by each stormy peak and desert shore,
The hardy isleman tugs the daring oar,
Practiced alike his venturous course to keep,
Through the white breakers or the pathless deep."

—*Scott.*

THESE islands are named for the Irish slaves, formerly called Westmen, who are reported to have fled to this desolate pile in 879. For centuries it was the resort of piratical expeditions from England and from far-away Barbary. The first recorded attack was made by an English crew under the command of "Gentleman John." Three years afterwards the church property was restored by King James, and John was severely punished.

The greatest raid was made in 1627. Barbary pirates were planning an expedition for plunder. One of them held a Danish slave by the name of Paul, who was tired of his life of servitude and counseled his master to make an expedition to Iceland. He stated that he had been there and could pilot them and that they could obtain a large profit in sheep and church valuables as well as many slaves. The expedition was decided upon and for his treachery he was to receive his freedom. The flotilla comprised four ships, one sailing from *Kyle* and three from Algiers. June 15 1627 the ship from *Kyle* reached *Grimdavik,* Iceland. They ransacked the village and took several prisoners. The people mistook the pirates for English fishermen, who had long been in the habit of landing on the coast to steal a few sheep, and so did not flee. The Moors captured a Danish trading vessel and then sailed to

Hafnarfjörðr. After raiding this settlement they sailed for *Kyle,* which they reached in five weeks from their departure. Their prisoners were sold in the slave market.

The three ships from Algiers reached *Berufjörðr* and thoroughly sacked the town. They remained on the Iceland coast eight days, captured one hundred and ten people and secured a large amount of booty from the treasure chests of the people and the churches. They were extremely cruel with the older people but quite kind to the children, hoping to convert them to the faith of Mohammed. To illustrate,—

At *Hál* they found the priest's wife, an aged woman, confined to the bed with sickness. They dragged her down to the shore, but finding her physically unable to go with them, beat her into an unconscious state with their muskets, a condition much to be preferred to that in which so many of her people found themselves in Moorish slavery.

They next set sail for the Westman Isles. They pressed into service an Icelandic renegade who had acted as pilot for English fishing boats. At this time the population of *Heimaey* was of two classes; first, Icelandic fishermen and birdcatchers and second, a small Colony of Danish officials and their servants. The Icelanders so mistrusted the Danes that they fled to the cliffs rather than assist them to repel the invaders. The Danish agent, Bagge, armed his assistants and prepared as best he could for defense, posting sentinels around the island.

Early in the morning Thorstein showed the pirates a secret path up the face of the cliffs at the south, which they ascended and spread out their damp powder to dry. During this time they danced and yelled in fiendish glee looking down upon their helpless victims. The raiders then divided into three bands and thoroughly

ransacked the village. They looted the church and in mockery rang the bells, arrayed themselves in the vestments of the priest and finally burned the church. The people fled to the several caves in the tufa, many were murdered while in flight and others captured and bound. For three days one hundred people hid in one of these caves which is so concealed that it is with difficulty that it can be found.

Jon Thorstein, the first translator of the Psalms into Icelandic verse, a priest, since called "the Martyr," took refuge in a small cave with his family where he doubtless would have been saved had it not been for the curiosity of a companion who ventured to the entrance and exposed himself and thus attracted the attention of the pirates. The following account is from the history of Björn of *Scandsá*:—

"The priest went to the outer part of the cave, where he saw that blood ran in the opening; and then he hied him out, and saw that Snorri lay headless at the door of the cave: for the raiders had shot off his head, and he had been to them a signal for the cave. Then Jon went within again telling this hap; and he bade his folks beseech Almighty God to succor them. Forthwith thereafter these noisy hounds stood over the cave, so that he heard their footfall."

" 'Margrjet, they are coming,' he said, 'Lo, I will go to meet them without fear!' "

"He prayed that God's grace might not leave her. But while the words were in the saying, the bloodthirsty hounds came to the cave's mouth and would search it, but the priest went out to meet them. Now when they saw him, one of them said," (doubtless the renegade, Thorstein),—

" 'Why art thou here, Sira Jon? Ought'st not to be at home in thy church?' " The priest answered—

" 'I was there this morning.' "

Then said the murderer,

" 'Thou wilt not be there to-morrow morning.' "

And thereafter he cut him on the head to the bone. The priest stretched out his hands and said,—

" 'I commit me to my God. That thou doest do freely!' " "The wretch then struck him another blow. At this he cried out saying,—"

" 'I commit me to my Lord Jesus Christ.' "

"Then Margrjet, the priest's wife, cast herself at the feet of the tyrant, and clung to them, thinking that his heart might be softened, but there was no pity in these monsters. Then the scoundrel struck a third blow. The priest said,—"

" 'That is enough. Lord Jesus receive my soul!' " Then the foul man cleft his skull asunder. Thus he lost his life."

"There was a little rift higher up in the cliff than where these folk lay, and two women saw and heard all these things."

Nearly four hundred Icelanders were carried to the Algerian slave markets where most of them speedily succumbed to the cruelty of their masters and the hot climate. Of the many carried away only thirteen ever returned to their native land.

When *Herjölfr* settled in the Westman islands, legend relates that he buried a large amount of gold, part of which he obtained in his Viking expeditions to the English Channel and the remainder by selling the water of the only spring on *Heimaey*. His daughter, Vilborg, in true charity and by stealth, distributed the water to poor people in times of drought. The residents of the island delight to show the niche in the tufa where *Herjölfr* stabled his horses. The only spring on *Heimaey* to this day is called Vilpá in memory of the maiden. Her father with all his wealth was buried during an earthquake and the inhabitants, when they

have nothing else to do, delight in searching for the hidden treasure which the leader of the pirates, Morad, failed to find.

The Westman Isles are fourteen in number and lie seven miles off the south coast of Iceland. Four of these are entirely barren, sea-washed and storm-beaten, affording admirable nesting places for sea birds. The strait which separates them from the mainland is shallow, beset with shoals and hidden reefs and contains several treacherous currents. The mainland shore, the *Rangar Sands,* has a broad morass of drifting volcanic sand, upon which heavy waves continually break, rendering it nearly impossible to launch or beach a boat. Thus the Westman Isles are isolated much more than the narrow strait would indicate.

Until within a few years the children born on *Heimaey* have always died within two weeks of birth with infantile tetanus. It was formerly the custom for prospective mothers to visit the mainland to save their children from this dread disease. Improved sanitary conditions and scientific medical treatment have lately made this customary precaution unnecessary. Formerly the inhabitants were recruited by residents of the north of Iceland.

Heimaey, the "Home Island," has an area of only four square miles and a population of less than one thousand. The village is on the northern side of the island, on the south shore of a little bay, under the bird cliffs which afford a harbor for small craft and then only in calm weather. This little bay is separated from the strait by the grand bird cliffs 2000 feet high, which are attached to the island by a narrow rim of volcanic sand. A solitary cone, *Helgafell,* with a black crater stands at the center of the island and *Heimaey* clings to the lower slope of the volcano, apparently ready to loose its grip and slip into the sea.

The land slopes gently upward to the cone of cinder, tufa, and ash. The lower slopes are covered with a scanty carpet of grass freely sprinkled with flowers, where uncertain pasturage invites the sheep and forms a strong contrast to the red and black cone which rises naked against sea and sky.

The remainder of the island is a rough and jagged mass of lava, partly disintegrated into a desolate moor and partly storm-swept to the very ribs of the island. No brook chatters in the dark ravines, no trees shadow the sheep from summer's long sunshine. Wherever the lava has crumbled to mingle with the droppings of uncounted generations of seabirds, the grass is emerald green as if in memory of the first settlers from the Emerald Isle. The climate is mild and enjoys the highest mean temperature in all Iceland. For centuries the people have had to depend upon their own resources. In recent years they have obtained supplies from Europe in exchange for oil, fish and feathers.

The houses, for the most part, are tidy little homes often with a little patch of carefully guarded cultivation. At the rear of the village stands the modest parish church, containing a good altar piece painted upon wood. Beside the church is the cemetery enclosed with a wall of lava and turf. The graves are mounds raised high above the level of the land, because the lava is so near the surface that to dig a grave is impossible and dirt is carried to the cemetery to form the mounds.

Excavations made in the volcanic sand in 1910 by Baron Klinckowström of Stockholm help to fix the date of the last eruption of the volcano. In the sand and ash he found evidences of a former people, a comb of ancient Scandinavian construction and the bones of the seal and sheep. One great volcano formerly covered this entire area and poured out ashes and cinder

all around it. This material has since solidified into tufa and much of the tufa has been worn away, leaving many solid columns of the original lava core, which stand isolated in the sea. Then came the second eruption when the crater of *Helgafell* was formed. The references given in the Landámabók and the exhumed material fix the date of this eruption subsequent to the settlement of the island by the Irish slaves. The tufa itself is very hard for this class of volcanic rock. It is weathered in fantastic forms with myriads of niches and contains several sea caves. One of these is so large that we entered it in a thirty foot naptha launch and turned about within. The view from within is strange and impressive. The deep azure of the waters, the light brown tufa dome, the dark cone of *Helgafell* rising above the village and the clouds of sea birds shadowing the entrance to the cave and filling the air with a resounding clangor on our exit made a mark on memory's tablet never to be effaced.

The most interesting occupation in *Heimaey* is bird catching. Of course the fish curing is worthy of attention, but then it is much the same whether we see it on the drear coast of Labrador, the green slopes of the Faroes, the lava blocks of Iceland or the wood stages of Gloucester. With the inhabitants of this volcanic pile it is not only a business it is a pleasure and an art which has culminated with generations of experience. The fulmar, puffin and guillemot are the principal birds taken. Throughout the summer the raucid clamor of the fulmars on the face of the cliffs mingles with the complaints of the puffins which stand in long rows like lines of soldiers, and the guillemots scan each other sagely from their captured niches in the tufa. These mammoth cliffs are riddled with holes and cracks and ornamented with narrow, projecting ledges. Above the cliffs there is an abundance of loose material where

Helgafell, Volcanic Cone in Vestmannaeyjar.

A Chain of Basalt Pyramids in Faroe.

the shearwaters and puffins excavate their burrows.

The cliffs are the property of the Danish Crown and are rented annually in sections at a price ranging from sixty to seventy-five dollars. The laws governing bird catching are well defined and strict. The season and method of capture of each species is explicitly stated. A gun can never be used under any circumstances. No act can be committed which would in the least disturb the birds. The eider duck can never be killed except by a man who can prove that he was actually starving with no other means of procuring food. But above all the laws and rendering laws unnecessary is a sound public opinion.

All the birds are very tame. Tens of thousands of puffins sit upright along the tops of the crags, many of them still holding rows of little fishes in their great beaks. The catchers station themselves at definite intervals along the cliffs and catch them in a net as they fly past. Their necks are broken with a sudden twist as the net is unloaded and the birds left in piles along the ground or thrown to the bottom of the cliff to be gathered by the boys and women who pluck them. The breast is used for food. The remainder of the birds are strung on long lines and hung upon the fences or festooned from the gables of the houses to dry and to furnish fuel. A single puffin is worth when first captured about a cent and a half. The down is sold at the trader's store for thirteen cents per pound. About 40,000 puffins are taken on these cliffs each season.

The fulmar is nearly as important as the puffin. About 30,000 are captured during the open season. The fulmar, "foul-gull," is appropriately named. When captured or disturbed it spits a large quantity of oily fluid, rank with the odor of putrid fish. These birds are taken by the simple act of knocking them over with a club. Several men usually work in unison. One

man has a long rope fastened to his waist and then twisted around each thigh. Suspended in the air, or with his feet against the face of the cliff he ascends or descends the sides of the rock, kicking himself outward. The rope is managed by three or four men at the top of the cliff and sometimes secured by an iron ring fastened in the rock.

The fulmars are plucked, the heads and wings cut off, the body split open, the interior fat cleaned out, and then the birds are either smoked or packed in salt for winter use. The fat is boiled down to a thick oil, spiced and used as a substitute for butter. Ten fulmars will yield a liter of oil. The oil is used in the native lamps. The entrails, heads, wings and legs are dried and used for fuel. It is so difficult to free the feathers from the oil that they are of little value. When thoroughly cleaned they are worth only twelve cents per pound. The birds themselves when cured are worth four cents each.

Nearly a thousand gannets, Solon Goose, are taken in these islands each year. Why it is called the "Solon" is not known. It is possible that it really possesses wisdom in excess of other geese. Scientifically it is not a real goose. A great many kittiwakes and guillemots are captured though the total value is much less than the above mentioned birds.

The young men of *Heimaey* capture the stormy petrels alive for the purpose of playing jokes with them. The birds give a sound similar to the purring of a cat. Several of them are let loose in the night in the house of the person on whom the joke is to be played. The birds dart about the house in a lively manner and give their cry of alarm which is weird and uncanny. It produces the desired effect upon the sleeper as he awakens.

We steamed away from *Heimaey,* passed between

Fuglasker and *Reykjaness* where steam was rising from numerous hot springs and at seven in the morning, having crossed *Faxafjörðr,* dropped anchor in the stream before the still slumbering city of *Reykjavik.*

CHAPTER VI

REYKJAVIK

"When the old world is sterile
And the ages are effete,
He will from wrecks and sediment
The fairer world complete."

—*Emerson.*

AFTER searching three years, *Ingölfr* found the storm-driven pillars cast ashore in a steaming creek. He called the place *Reykjavik,* the *Smoking Creek.*

Hardly was the anchor down in the midstream before a rosy cheeked and genial gentleman came on board and introduced himself as Helgi Zoëga. He was the man with whom I had corresponded relative to arranging our trip, providing ponies, a guide and a pack train. To his quiet forethought and courteousness in after days I had much for which to be thankful. We were absolute strangers to land and people. He took us ashore in his boat and conducted us to *Hotel Ísland* where we found a comfortable, large and well furnished room. Shortly our baggage appeared by the same quiet agency. I then went to his office and spent some time in going over the plan of the route to be followed, the ponies, their equipment and the provisions to be taken.

I had been judiciously forwarned by the books of several English travellers about the snares into which the uninitiated would fall in dealing with an Icelandic guide so I was forearmed. I recall the quiet smile that scarcely spread from Zoëga's lips when I asked about the extra straps, the extra shoes for the ponies and the price that was to be paid at the end of the journey,

the reliability of the guide and if the agreement had not better be placed in writing to avoid misunderstanding at time of settlement. He replied that all was in readiness according to my wishes and his experience and assured me of a satisfactory ending of the journey. Let me state that in my long experience with Mr. Zoëga and many other Icelandic gentlemen, I was always squarely treated in small as well as in larger matters. Never has an Icelander attempted to take advantage of my ignorance. As far as my experience of four summers in Iceland goes the English statements are libels on Icelandic integrity. Could we do business in America with the same frankness and reliability we would need less bookkeeping, there would be less locking of doors and less work for the courts; we might close many of our jails and divert a whole army of people from corrective and restraining work into productive occupations.

The route decided upon, the arrangements completed to our satisfaction, Mrs. Russell and I set out to view the city of *Reykjavik* and receive our first impressions of Iceland. We turned our steps in the direction of the *Laug,* hot spring, which is about two miles from the city square. The route is along the *Laugarvegur,* a street with many houses of comfortable design and good construction. The hot springs are on a small stream running out of the meadow into the bay. Along the route we saw many women with bundles on their backs, boys with wheelbarrows filled with clothes and others carrying large wicker baskets. It is the "city laundry." A long iron grill has been erected over the run-way from the boiling springs to prevent accidents. The clothes are washed in the running water and hung up to dry on numerous lines strung in the meadow. Commodious sheds have been erected for protection during rain and for ironing and repairing

garments. Great piles of wool were scattered over the hillside to dry after being washed in the springs. Throughout the country the hot springs are made use of for woolwashing. The water seems to have special properties for removing the animal grease.

When we had returned from our long trip across the country in 1910 we sent a generous supply of soiled, torn and buttonless clothes to this out-of-door laundry. What was our amazement to find on its return to the hotel that the buttons had been replaced and all the rents neatly repaired. What a contrast to an American laundry!

The flow of the boiling water is quite constant throughout the year and the temeprature is constant. My thermometer registered 95°C. in the runway. Considerable steam rises from the water and when the air is still it is most difficult to obtain an unclouded photograph. The water is impregnated with hydrogen sulfid and a little carbon dioxid. This is true of most of the hot springs in the country.

On our return to the city we passed near the Leper Hospital, an excellent modern structure located near the sea. None but physicians are allowed admission to visit. While the Teutonic races are quite free from this ancient disease, nevertheless it does exist in Norway, around the shores of the Baltic, in Iceland, Scotland and in those portions of the United States settled by Scandinavians. It seems to effect islands and seacoasts and because of this it is often stated that the disease in Iceland has been perpetuated by eating tainted fish in times of famine. Credit is due the physicians of Iceland in not only controlling the plague but in actually obtaining a steady decrease. This disease goes hand in hand with tuberculosis, that is, lepers are usually tubercular. Until recently tuberculosis was prevalent in Iceland owing to the damp and

unventilated houses especially on the farms. Thanks to the energetic crusade of the Icelandic doctors the conditions are rapidly improving and both leprosy and tuberculosis are decreasing. The Surgeon-General, Guðmundur Björnsson, told me with considerable pride that the percentage of tuberculosis in Iceland was now less than in Europe or the United States.

Reykjavik is pleasantly situated on the north side of a headland projecting into *Faxafjörðr*. There are two high hills in the city up which the city is slowly creeping. The ancient portion of the city is on the level ground along the waterfront. It is not the untidy and ill-smelling place that many English writers would have us believe. On the contrary it is clean, the streets are wide and well kept, running water has been brought from a distance of eight miles to the capital. The fish curing is confined to the shore as it is in all the coast towns and it is not offensive. Indeed I might cite worse conditions in the fishing centers of Old England and New England. Many a street in Edinburgh, London, Boston and New York is in worse sanitary condition than the meanest streets of *Reykjavik*. The stores are numerous and well stocked with European and American wares. Two of the emporiums rise to the dignity of apartment stores, where the necessities of life as well as many of its luxuries may be obtained. The small shops are numerous where specialties are carried such as shoestores, tobacconists, dairy products and stationery shops. Telegraph and telephone connect the capital with all the towns and many of the isolated farms. The submarine cable which lands at *Seyðisfjörðr* connects the island with the world beyond. A modern gas plant supplies illumination for the city and a convenient fuel.

The population is a little less than 12,000 and has rapidly increased during the past fifty-eight years under

the influence of the new life that has come to Iceland since in 1854 the people obtained commercial liberty. In 1874 Iceland got its constitution which was amended in 1903 to the effect that the Governor must be an Icelander and reside in *Reykjavik*. To all intents Iceland is an independent, self-governing republic with a liberal constitution. The following is a brief outline of the government.

It has a constitution. It is governed by the *Althing*, a legislative body composed of a Senate with fourteen members and a House of Representatives of twenty-six members. These forty members are chosen by popular ballot and when they assemble they choose the fourteen senators from their own number. Until 1911 six of the senators were appointed by the King of Denmark under the direction of the Icelandic Governor. This virtually gave the Governor the control of the Senate. This is now abolished. This same constitutional amendment completely enfranchises the women.

The Supreme Court is located in *Reykjavik* and consists of two judges and a Chief Justice. Their decision may be appealed to the Supreme Court of Denmark. The King of Denmark has a veto over the acts of the Icelandic Parliament but so far it has never been exercised. With this exception and the lack of the power to make treaties, the country is virtually an independent republic under a fair and liberal constitution. Some of the progressives desire a step further and would entirely sever themselves from Denmark. Owing to their defenseless condition and the inroads of the French and English upon the fishing grounds it will be wise to keep the protection of Denmark for some years.

There are several excellent buildings in the capital. The more modern ones such as the *Thinghüs*, Government Building, the *Safnahüs*, Library, are pleasing in

architecture and solid in construction. The *Thinghüs* is situated on one side of the public square close to the Cathedral. Its interior is well arranged for legislative purposes and the decorations are simple, dignified and relieved with slight ornamentation. It contains many good paintings by Danish masters. There is a young school of Icelandic painting and some of the works are in this building. If Baedeker were writing a guide to *Reykjavik* he would double star "The Lögberg," a view towards *Hengil.* There are several portraits of the Danish Kings and an excellent one of Jon Sigurðsson, the man who holds the same place in the hearts of the Icelanders that George Washington holds in ours and for the same reason. He is the Father of modern Iceland but he won the constitution without bloodshed. There is a painting by Otto Bache, "The Killing of Thoranin by Skarpðin." Special notice should be taken of "The Ride of the Valkyrie" by P. Arbo. It is a wonderful conception and is full of action. Here also is a grand piece of wood carving made entirely with a jackknife by an Icelandic farmer as a memorial to Jon Sigurðsson. It is in the form of a frame to a pier glass and a pier stand. It is equal in design and execution to that famous carved pulpit in St. Gudule at Brussells, which was made by Verbruggen in 1669. There is an excellent bronze of Jonas Hallgrimsson who died in 1845. On leaving the *Thinghüs* the custodian gave us a friendly smile and a cordial handshake. This treatment is refreshing after the customary request for the shilling, the mark or the franc as is the common experience elsewhere.

The Government House which contains the executive offices is older and much more simple in design. There are two banks in the city and one of them is housed in its own building, which was the finest in Iceland until the completion of the *Safnahüs.*

This building houses over 80,000 bound volumes besides 6,000 manuscripts, many of them priceless. For a city of less than 12,000 people this is a good sized library. A thorough examination of the bookshelves and the lists of the book charges yields abundant evidence of the inborn aptness of this people for education. Mind culture reaches a high level. It is pleasing to an American to note Webster's Unabridged Dictionary in a prominent position and a well used set of the works of the Sage of Concord, Ralph Waldo Emerson. The library contains a well balanced collection of history, literature, science, philosophy, poetry and economics, not only in the native language but in all the spoken tongues of Europe. For the benefit of those who do not read English there are translations of our masterpieces of drama, poetry and romance. I was pleased to note the evidence of much use of the American classics and almost the entire absence of that great class of light reading which lumbers our bookstalls, follows us on the train and burdens the card catalogs of the American libraries.

The basement shelters the collections of natural history and that portion devoted to Icelandic birds is practically complete. The botanical collection is far from complete and awaits the labor of some enthusiastic collector. I have seen in an isolated home far from the influence of the University a collection made by a boy that surpasses this one in the National Library. The collection of the minerals and lavas of the country forms a good nucleus and that is all. It seems strange with all the opportunities for work that some Icelandic geologist does not complete the work so well begun by Thorvaldur Thoroddsen. This man has produced an excellent geological map, as nearly complete as one man could possibly make it, considering the difficulties of travel and the miscellaneous character of the lavas.

The Hay Market and the Harbor at Reykjavik.

An Odd Corner in Reykjavik.

Most of the work on this topic has been done by Danes and Germans.

On the upper floor of the *Safnahús* there is a large and valuable collection of Icelandic antiquities. No visitor to Iceland, who would get a glimpse of the early times in the country, should miss this collection. When he has seen it, it will then be necessary to go to Copenhagen to view the remainder. Many of the finest things were taken there decades since. As a salve to its conscience the Danish treasury pays annually to Iceland the sum of $15,600 as "interest" on the borrowed treasures. Among the items of value we enumerate the following,—A wooden crucifix taken from a lava cave and supposed to be a Culdee relic from the days antedating the settlement by the Norse; enamelled and jewelled crucifixes from the thirteenth century; many weapons from the eleventh and twelfth centuries such as halberds, bills, two handed swords, spears and daggers; female wearing apparel from many centuries, brocaded, embroidered and variously adorned with filigree work in silver and gold; snuff horns of ivory and "horns" for mead and ale variously and richly carved; tapestry, very old, that would bring a fabulous price in the great museums of Europe; riding costumes, bridles, saddles and a great variety of wooden boxes, bowls and foot boards ornately carved. Here also is preserved the first Bible printed in Iceland bearing the date of 1584. It was printed at *Hólar* by Bishop Gudbrand Thorlaksson who translated it from the German of Martin Luther and carved with his own hand most of the blocks that illustrate it. This Bible was reprinted at *Hólar* in 1644 and the edition was limited to 1000 copies. The writer counts himself fortunate to possess a copy of this ancient book, which was presented to him by an Icelandic friend. It is the work of Bishop Thorlak and is translated directly from the Greek and Latin to cor-

rect some errors in Thorlaksson's translation from the German. It is the first Bible to have the text divided into verses.

The religion of Iceland is Lutheran and is connected with the state. There are three Bishops in the country, the head Bishop is at *Reykjavik* and this man must go to Copenhagen to be ordained. The Bishop of *Reykjavik* goes to *Hólar* or to *Skálholt,* dwelling-ridge, in the seats of the secondary Bishops to ordain them respectively. At the age of fourteen the children are confirmed and at that time must possess a good knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, natural history in general, Icelandic history in detail and general history both ancient and modern. The Cathedral at *Reykjavik* is a very plain and uninteresting building and would disappoint the stranger did he not know that the Icelander is unpretentious in his religion. It is the internal and not the external qualities that appeal to him. The building contains one of Thorvaldsen's masterpieces, a font which was presented to the nation by this famous son of Iceland. In the square which is close to the Cathedral and the *Thinghüs* there is a large statue of Albert Thorvaldsen. It is appropriately mounted on a stone pedestal and was the gift of the people of Copenhagen at the national celebration of 1874.

Denmark claims Thorvaldsen as her son. The facts are as follows, and the reader may choose for himself the country to which he really belongs. His father was an Icelander, a wood carver, his mother was a Dane, the daughter of a parson. Albert Thorvaldsen was born at sea midway between Denmark and Iceland. Porcelain copies of his *Dawn* and *Evening,* bas reliefs, are set into many tombstones in *Reykjavik.* The dead white of the porcelain is in fine contrast to the cold grey of the stone. This method of ornamenting a tombstone is unique and is not without a fine touch of sentiment.

The University includes the Medical College, the Theological Seminary, the Law School besides the Liberal Arts. Medical graduates, before taking up their labors in Iceland must spend at least six months in clinical work in some approved hospital in Copenhagen. The reason is obvious. There are fifty doctors in the employment of the government and scattered throughout the country. They are all directly in charge of the Surgeon General. There is little done in science at the University. Students who wish to become proficient in any of its numerous branches must go to the Universities of Europe. Within the city there are also a Commercial School, a Nautical School and a Female High School besides the Grammar School and the common schools.

There are about fifteen newspapers published in the city and several magazines. Most of the papers are weeklies. Among these periodicals we note a Theological Journal, an Agricultural Paper, a Good Templar Journal, the "War Cry" and a Woman Suffragist Journal. No mention is here made of the essays, romances, *Sagas,* translations and poetry published in the city. In the bookbinding establishments the work is done by hand and it is efficient. Honest work goes with every stitch.

There are two comfortable hotels in the city and several small boarding houses. *Hotel Island* is a temperance house and is kept by a group of Good Templars. *Hotel Reykjavik,* which is more modern, supplies liquors. In 1909 a law was passed which forbids the importation of any liquors after 1912 and prohibits the sale of all alcholic beverages after 1915. This is the work of the Good Templars and the anti-prohibitionists are trying to get it repealed before 1915. The service at the hotels is excellent and one dines to the accompaniment of the minor music of Iceland by an orchestra.

The table surely does not lack variety and abundance is the rule. The bill of fare is after the Danish mode. One may choose from at least a dozen different dishes of meats and cured fish at breakfast and supper. Smoked salmon, eaten without further cooking, pickled fish with raw onion, anchovies, sardines, smoked herring, the breast of goose smoked and pressed with spices, duck eggs in a variety of modes, rye bread and coffee, the finest brew in the world, are among the appetizers with which one breaks his fast at ten in the morning. About two in the afternoon there is a real dinner. It is prefaced with a sweet soup of a purple hue and surprisingly palatable, then comes fish cooked to perfection, vegetables and a roast, usually mutton or veal, and a delicious dessert. The coffee is taken in the reception room or in the smoking parlor as one chooses. Oatmeal may be procured at the hotels by asking before hand to have "porridge" cooked. In all my wanderings through the country I never found it except at one farm. The supper at seven is a repetition of the breakfast. Coffee and cakes may be had at any time at a moment's notice. Coffee is also brought to the room about seven in the morning. This with rusks is taken in bed and one is supposed to take the "coffee nap" afterwards.

Reykjavik is the commercial metropolis and the larger industries center here, although *Akureyri* is the clearing house for the north coast. These are the centers for exporting the fish, mutton, butter, wool, skins, etc. Nearly all the handicrafts are represented in the capital. There is a woolen mill where *vaðmal,* an Icelandic cloth, is woven, a sawmill dresses the crude lumber brought from Norway. There are several silversmiths who equal the artists of Europe in delicate engraving and in filigree as well as enamelling. One man has discovered a process, which he wisely keeps secret,

for coloring the precious metals.

The foreign Consuls resident in *Reykjavik* are only two, one from France and the other from Norway. The following countries are represented through Icelanders who are appointed by the foreign governments, England, Germany, Sweden, Belgium and Holland. The United States has no representation whatever.

The Thorvaldsen Bazar is an attractive place, verging upon a museum of antiquities. It is coöperative and the proceeds go to a charity. It is conducted by groups of ladies who give their time. Many women on the farms knit stockings, mittens, gloves, make skin shoes, embroidery in linen and send the items to the bazar to be sold on commission. There are also exposed for sale stuffed birds, minerals, odd items such as footboards, horn spoons, snuff horns, *skyr* bowls and a great variety of other items that have long been hoarded by familes in the interior. Some of the carved pieces of wood are of great age and the carving is artistically done. The foot board is of interest and as reference to it will be made later in connection with the homes of the people I will describe the one which now adorns my guest room wall. It is made of Norway spruce, four feet long and seven inches wide. It is ornately carved on both sides. On one side there are three circles five and one half inches in diameter, one at each end and one in the middle. The circles are cut to represent *Balder's brá,* a marguerite, which blooms abundantly throughout the country near the coast. The central circle shows only the ends of the numerous petals while the center of the circle is used for engraving the name and the date, 1868. Between the two circles at either side of the center a prayer is carved in the *Ogam rune.* On the reverse side there is a series of six prows of the Viking ship. The design of the prow of the ancient ship lends itself well to the wood carver and it

appears in a variety of forms on the ancient as well as the modern pieces. There is an expert wood carver in *Reykjavik* and it is well worth while to visit Stefán Eiriksson in his workshop. I have before me a *skyr áskr,* bowl for curds. In old times each person had his own *áskr* which he carved to suit his fancy. This one is completely covered with fine carving. The handles represent dragons and to the back of one with a wooden hinge is attached the cover. The center of the cover is carved to represent *Balder's brá.* It is a beautiful piece of work and is carved out of a solid piece of the Iceland birch.

There are several good photographers in the city and one of them, M. Ólafsson, has made excellent stereoscopic views of the natural wonders of Iceland. He has travelled over most of the country to obtain the negatives and he made his own stereoscopic camera as well as the different cameras in his studio. There are several shops where good photographs may be obtained. The city has an excellent public bath with steam, shower, hot and cold water. There are two hospitals, Chemist's shops, (drug stores), barbers, in fact every thing required in civilized life.

We know so little of Iceland. Its very name suggest all the cold and inhospitable conditions of the north and the stranger unread in Icelandic conditions has many a surprise in store. The worst thing I know about Iceland is its name. It should have been christened *Fireland.*

The climate of Iceland is exceedingly mild in winter and in the summer it never gets very warm. The annual mean temperature of the extreme north is about 2°C. lower than in the south. The climate changes very little with the latitude but more with the glaciers, the coast and the solfataras. The following table, compiled from the Meteorological Records at *Berufjörðr,*

The Latin School at Reykjavik.

The Thinghús, Parliament Building, Reykjavik.

will convey a good idea of the conditions in the country. This table covers *twenty-five* years for the Max. and Min. temperatures. The station is in Long. 14° 15′ W., Lat. 64° 40′ N. and it is 55 feet above the sea. The temperatures are given in degrees *Centigrade.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6th Mo.
Max.	10.5	12.3	12.1	14.3	20.4	25.4 C.
	7	8	9	10	11	12th Mo.
	26.3	20.7	20.5	16.4	11.7	11.5 C.
	1	2	3	4	5	6th Mo.
Min.	—23.1	—19.3	—21.9	—18.3	—8.5	—4.2 C.
	7	8	9	10	11	12th Mo.
	0.8	—2.9	—5.8	—10.3	—17.4	—20.4 C.
	1	2	3	4	5	6th Mo.
Sleet.	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0 Days.
	7	8	9	10	11	12th Mo.
	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1 Days.
	1	2	3	4	5	6th Mo.
Snow.	9.	8.	9.	5.	4.	1. Days.
	7	8	9	10	11	12th Mo.
	0.0	0.0	1.0	3.0	6.0	8.0 Days.
	1	2	3	4	5	6th Mo.
Rain.	17.0	17.0	16.0	14.00	13.0	11.0 Days.
	7	8	9	10	11	12th Mo.
	11.0	12.0	15.0	16.0	17.0	18.0 Days.

When we recall that *zero* on the Centigrade thermometer is the *freezing point* these figures will correct our erroneous ideas of the extreme low temperatures which we have ever associated with *Iceland.* The lowest temperature in twenty-five years at this station was only *nine and one half degrees below zero* on the Fahrenheit scale. During the summer of 1910 I travelled in the north and crossed the country in the vicinity of the western glaciers and the lowest temperature recorded during six weeks was 32°F. in a mountain pass in the north and the highest was 56°F. the mean for the entire time was 44°F. All these temperatures were taken in the shade at 7 A. M., Noon and 9 P. M.

At the summer solstice the midnight sun is just visible in the south and at longer periods in the north on the table lands. Even after the sun has set, it is as light as day and one can read at midnight in the houses during several weeks.

In a country so diversified with sea, glaciers, naked volcanoes, uplands and rivers the sunsets are glorious. Many nights have I climbed the hill back of the city at eleven to watch the sunset and to be present at the ushering in of the dawn. Below me lay the dreaming city with here and there a strolling couple by the waterside. South and east the scattered peaks of the Fire Peninsula, though twenty miles distant they seemed in the clear atmosphere to be near at hand and the purple perfect cone of *Keilir,* Tusk, stood apart, a guardian of the fire group beyond. Behind me stretched the long and precipitous table land of *Esja,* its slopes scarred and ragged and the patches of pale green sphagnum marking the location of the water pockets in the debris. It was crowned with a heavy cap of ice and the fluttering folds of fog hung over it like the bridal veil of an Icelandic maid. To the west and north is spread the broad and glimmering bay of *Faxa* while sixty miles beyond, though appearing less than half that distance, *Snaefells Jökull* at the head of its regiment of volcanic cones towers from the sea.

It is midnight, local time. The sun has been in his ocean bath for thirty minutes and in an equal length of time he will emerge near by the locality of his plunge. It is an entrancing scene and recalls the Twilight of the Gods. The heavens are overcast with a rose-flesh hue of varying tones. No stars dot the bending dome, no moon skirts the far horizon. The *Faxa* is like a molten sea of precious metal and across it roll billows of purple light which striking the base of *Keilir,* surge to its pointed summit in waves of lighter

hue to break in confusion on the distant volcanoes. *Esja* catches the color of the sky, its dripping parapet glistens as at noon and its ice mantle is transformed into rosy quartz. The crowning glory of the moment is *Snaefells*. Behind it is the sun. A broad streamer rises vertically to the zenith from behind the mountain. It splits the warmer shades with a band of saffron. It spreads outward like an opening fan. *Snaefells* is the jewel in the end of the fan handle. The fan unfolds until a full quadrant of the heavens have turned to gold with radiating streaks of crimson. The ice-cap has become a ruby and *Esja* a fiery opal. Kaleidoscopic is the change. Like the Borealis the colors come and go, the mists open and close and the tints deepen. *Esja* lives doubly in the bosom of the fiord within whose shadow the fishing fleet rock gently at their moorings. Even the ribbons of mist are imaged in the sea and in those vast depths drift softly like the real ones of the upper air. The cone of *Keilir* brightens, the slumbering tints burst into fire, the fire resolves itself into white light. The sun has risen from its midnight bath, morning has come and I seek the hotel conscious that neither pen nor brush can catch the true values of this great harmony of colors, that it is impossible to set it to meter or spread it upon the canvas. But it lives indelibly in the soul of the poet, the painter and the musician. Yes it is music, a great symphony,—

> "It is passion that left the ground
> To loose itself in the sky."

CHAPTER VII

THINGVELLIR

"Land of lost gods and godlike men, art thou!
Thy vales of evergreen, thy hills of snow,
Proclaim thee Nature's varied favorite now."

—*Byron.*

WE had expected to start on our tour through the south of Iceland at eight in the morning. It was ten when we left the enclosure where the ponies were saddled and the pack horses laden. There were eight ponies in the troup, two pack ponies, two riding ponies for each of us and two for the guide. If the riding is easy the ridden ponies are changed midway of the days ride. If the road is difficult the ponies are changed twice. Our guide was Johannes Zoëga, the uncle of Helgi. He was nearly seventy years of age and as spry as a youth of twenty. Since he was fifteen he had followed the trails and he knew every path we crossed. Never was he in doubt in the network of trails on the moors or in the valleys but rode rapidly ahead at the crossings and turned the leading pony into the right path. Johannes was fully six feet tall and his favorite pony was the smallest in the string. On rough ground or in the deep ruts, it was amusing to watch his attempts to keep his feet off the ground. He spoke English quite well and understood it better than he spoke it. He was a thorough gentleman, waited upon us unceasingly and made our trip most enjoyable.

When I saw the ponies which were to carry us over so many miles of rough country, up the lower slopes of lava-blistered *Hekla* and across the bridgeless rivers, I thought that the diminutive beasts would not be able

to do the work. I felt ashamed to ask the little fellows to carry my hundred and eighty pounds. I mentioned the matter to Mr. Zoëga. He smiled and said they would do the work required of them in an entirely satisfactory manner. They did. It was our first experience in the saddle, nor had I been on a horse since, as a small boy, I was accustomed to ride bare-back to a mountain pasture in New Hampshire to salt and count the sheep. It proved to be just as well, for no matter what may be one's horsemanship in other lands and on other steeds, with the Icelandic *hestr* conditions are different and one must first put aside his acquired ideas of horsemanship and be governed by new conditions and experiences.

Johannes tied the five loose ponies together with a string that seemed ludicrously inadequate. It is customary in passing through a village to tie a small cord around the under jaw of a pony and fasten the other end of this cord to a knot in the tail of the next pony. We started into the main street and turned towards *Thingvellir,* Valley-of-the-Parliament, with Johannes in the lead with the five ponies. He soon had them all in a trot but do our best our ponies would only walk and then on the side of the street that seemed to please them best. It was an uncomfortable experience, this first exhibition of horsemanship on the main thoroughfare in the busiest portion of the day with the people leaving their work or running to the doorways to watch the Americans. Possibly it was our strange costumes, made for the occasion, which attracted their attention as these never failed to do in the interior. We were pleased to think of it this way. After half a mile of this aimless walking we caught up with the guide who was waiting, as he said,—

"It is not good for guide to let party get out of sight."

He straightened out his tangled string of ponies and with a sharp "hót—hót" was away at a smart pace. *Hót—hót, hót—hót!* I shouted, in this my first Icelandic, and I said it so vigorously and with so many different accents that I must have got it right once, for away we went in good fashion and held our own at the heels of the train till we reached the *Elliðaár*, Ship-River. This is three miles out of the city and a famous salmon river the rights to which are annually purchased by a group of English sportsmen.

We stopped to rest the ponies. This is frequently necessary, especially when first starting on a long trip and always in the morning. Better accustomed to the saddle we rode on with much enjoyment of the novelty and with exhilaration, little thinking what those saddles had in store for us before that day's ride came to a close. Somewhere along this portion of the route I lost my riding belt. Deciding to do without it I refrained from returning in search. Three weeks later this belt was handed to us one evening, it having been sent on from farm to farm. Twelve miles out from *Reykjavik* we came to the last inhabited dwelling we were to see before night. It is at the branching of the post road from the *Thingvellir* road. It is a place for light refreshments, much resorted to on Sundays and holidays by the young people out riding. The ponies were turned into the little compound provided for that purpose and we entered and partook of milk, excellent coffee and cakes. Over a year later, on our way down from the north coast, we called at this same place and this time we rode into the yard in true Icelandic style. No matter how careful the Icelander is of his pony, and he favors him all he can, it is a matter of pride to enter a village or ride up to a lonely farm at a keen gallop. As my last guide, Ólafur said,—

"With reins tight and head up." To tighten the reins on an Icelandic pony is to put him into a gallop.

We were now ascending the divide. Every kilometer, (the frequently travelled routes have a stone marker placed every five kilometers), brought us to higher ground, with an ever increasing view. Looking backward, as the ponies climbed the steep gradient, we caught many glimpses of the smiling *Faxafjörðr*. The ice crown of *Snaefells Jökull* loomed larger though we were going from it. Several small lakes, of glacier origin, nestle in the vales to the north marked with a ring of verdant grass about them. The country through which we are passing is mostly devoid of grass and it is difficult to find sufficient feed for the ponies and we regulate our stops accordingly. This is a desolate, dreary country, piled with blocks of frost-riven lava which time has graciously covered with a mantle of lichens. The whimbrels made their appearance and stayed with us throughout the summer whenever we rode the heather. They are noisy birds, swooping overhead uttering their prolonged calls, or running along the trail ahead of the ponies and then perching upon a lichen-encrusted rock to be lost to view except to the close observer. Their colors blend perfectly with their surroundings. Of all the curios which we brought back from Iceland nothing reminds us more of our journeys than the long-billed whimbrel which is perched above our bookcases.

The snow-capped peaks of *Esja* stand out in bold relief, directly in front rises the dome of *Skálafell,* Hall-Mountain, to the right in the distance, we catch glimpses of the mountain summits at the southern end of *Thingvallavatn,* Lake-in-the-Valley-of-the-Parliament, which loom higher and higher as we climb the ridge. While in the midst of our contemplation of the scenery, the packs on one of the ponies loosened, the swinging

boxes startled him into a frightened gallop which he maintained across the heath till he had freed himself of all the burden. After some time the debris was collected and there being a patch of good grass here, we stopped to rest the ponies, repair the damage and take our first lunch in the open. Saddles and bridles were thrown off, the cases opened and we sat down to a canned lunch with hunger for the sauce. The opened lid of the packing box makes an excellent table.

"Is this not glorious?" questioned Mrs. Russell.

"Yes," I replied as I shied my first sardine tin at a whimbrel. "This is living, true enjoyment. Rain or shine, we are out for one long holiday and it will be a glorious one."

It was a picture that I should have photographed, that first lunch upon the mountain slope,—the ponies feeding around us untethered, the whimbrels circling closely above our heads, the plover calling from the heather, mountains upon mountains all around, blue with the distance or white with their perpetual snow mantles, the fleecy clouds drifting softly across the blue sky,—and then those things the camera can not catch,—the comfort of the sprawl upon the blooming heather, the respite from the galling saddles, the chocolate for those who do not enjoy the pipe and the pipe for those who do. We began to get acquainted with Johannes. As he filled his pipe with real American tobacco he told us of the many parties he had guided, how the English differed from the Danes, and the Germans from either of them in their likes and dislikes of the country, which required the most waiting upon and those who seemed the most grateful for the attentions he paid.

"Did you ever act as guide for Americans before," I asked.

"Before? Are you from America, the United States?"

We assured him that we had that pleasure, whereupon Johannes continued,

"Do you know Mr. * * * and Mr. * * *? No? Well, they were likely lads and lively and we had a grand time upon our trip. See this whip?"

Whereupon he displayed the peculiar riding whip of Iceland. It consists of a stock about fourteen inches long heavily mounted with silver ferules and with a large silver knob oval in shape at the end. To the end of this stock is attached a strap of good leather three feet long. It is not so much used to whip the pony one is riding as to snap at the ponies that are tempted from their straight and narrow way by a choice bit of grass.

"When those boys got back to *Reykjavik* they presented me with this fine whip and I have carried it ever since."

Two years later I was lecturing in New York City and chanced that night to show on the screen a slide in which Johannes figured. He loomed up splendidly from his tiny steed and presented a fine appearance with his flowing beard and slouched hat tipped to one side and with the beloved riding whip displayed in characteristic fashion. At the close of the lecture a gentleman approached me and asked,

"Did you have Johannes Zoëga for your guide? I thought I recognized him in one of the pictures."

"Yes," I replied, "he was our guide during our first trip in the country."

"He was my guide and I presented him with that whip."

The world is not so large after all.

Johannes then turned to Mrs. Russell and asked,

"What shall I call you? Your man's name is Russell shall I call you 'madam' or what?"

She replied, "You may call me 'madam' or 'Mrs. Russell,' whichever you choose."

"What," replied Johannes," your name Russell and your Man's name the same? Two people, man and wife, and same name?"

We then informed him that in the United States when a woman married she dropped her maiden name, or substituted it for her middle name and assumed the surname of her husband. This was difficult for Johannes to understand, inasmuch as in Iceland a woman always keeps her maiden name, even after marriage. A woman is named thus, *Sigurður Eiricksdóttir,* or, *Johanna Stefánsdóttir,* and she is always called the "daughter of her father." Likewise a man is the "son of his father" and is named accordingly. Thus, *Stefán Kristófersson,* or, *Björn Eyvindsson, Björn* the son of *Eyvind.* Now when this "son" comes to have a son and wishes to name him he may choose any Christian name he pleases but *he must be* "his son." Thus if *Björn Eyvindson* were to name his son he might call him Geir, Helgi, Ólafur, etc., but the patronymic would be dropped and he would be called *Björnsson. Ólafur Björnsson* would be the son of *Björn Eyvindsson.*

When we were through with our discussion of nomenclature it would have been difficult to have told which party was the more mystified.

The pack saddles were replaced, the fresh ponies saddled and we started upon the second stage of the day's journey. Soon we mounted to the top of the ridge which is 1,100 feet above the sea. Near the sixth kilometer stone, about eighteen miles, we came to the *Saeluhús,* fortunate-house, an unoccupied hospice in the deserts and mountains for the refuge of travellers who may be unexpectedly overtaken by a storm, especially in winter when the snow is fiercely driven across the moors. To cross in the blinding storm is to invite death. This one is a small stone structure. During our following summer we found several of these and in one of them

we were glad to take refuge.

This is the *Mossfellsheiði,* Moss-Mountain-Heath, the undisturbed home of the whimbrel and the golden plover. Before the road was built to *Thingvellir* there were a few scattering cairns to guide the traveller. There are at present many lofty cairns beside the way so that even in the drifting snow the traveller may find his way in winter. In the nearer view there is nothing but the barren land, the gray monotony of the moor and the eye of the traveller is held by the glories of the distant mountains.

The change of ponies was no doubt beneficial to those we had ridden in the morning and they trotted ahead with every sign of contentment, however, it brought no relief to the novices in the saddle. We were too weary to put the fresh mounts to a gallop and the jog, jog, jog on the hard road with the resulting thump, thump, thump on the saddle slightly damped the ardor of the first portion of the ride. We had just read Hall Caine's *Bondman* and named our first relay of steeds after the two chief characters in that volume, Michael Sunlocks and Greba. My *hestr,* Michael Sunlocks, was a light chestnut with heavy forelocks, mane and tail of a beautiful silvery whiteness, the forelocks would have blinded him had they not been carefully fastened to the bridle, the mane reached to his knees and his heavy tail swept the ground. He was plump and mettlesome. To describe an Icelandic *hestr,* saddle horse, as fat is not describing him at all. I have never seen one in poor condition. Greba was a deep bay mare of gentle spirit. They proved to be personifications of those two characters in the *Bondman.* What did it matter to us if Johannes called them by unpronouncable names? To us they were ever Michael and Greba, and they came to know their new names. Now it happens that the *Bondman* is founded upon the attempt of a renegade

Dane, Jorgen Jorgensen by name, to produce a revolution in Iceland in 1809. Here then was an appropriate name for my second mount and Jog Jogensen he was christened. He was a fiery little beast with plenty of grit as I found out after I had really learned to ride a *hestr.*

A chaming landscape burst suddenly into view. The largest of Icelandic lakes, *Thingvallavatn,* is spread like a mirror below the bluffs. Its forty square miles of water are enclosed with scenic, basaltic headlands, its surface broken only by two islands, small and extinct craters. We saw it at its best. Long bands of pearly cloud lay athwart the mountain range while cloud and mountain cone lived doubly in the emerald green. Our weary spirits rose the more we advanced, most of the monotonous moorland stretched in gray billows behind us, and the discomfort of the saddle was momentarily forgotten. When it seemed that we were going directly to the shore of the lake the road took a sharp bend to the left and we descended a gulley to a big brook. We scorned the iron bridge and turned the ponies into the stream to quench their thirst. The water being low, we forded.

At six P. M. we turned from the highway into the turf-walled lane leading up to the farm called *Kárastaðir,* literally, the-farm-of-sickness. Why it was thus named is evident in the name but that was many centuries since. It must be remembered that the names of the farms and all the place-names are the same today as they were christened a thousand or more years ago. Every place in Iceland was most appropriately named.

Kárastaðir is a pleasant farm located besides a noisy brook on the upland slope of the lakeshore. It is approached between parallel walls of turf. These turf walls also enclose the *tún,* the mowing land, or the home field. They are made of turf cut in long thick strips

and placed in layers. The walls are about three feet thick on the ground and narrow to half that width at the top. Grass grows luxuriantly all over them and they are often ornamented with a free sprinkling of wild flowers. I know of no hedgerow in England or country lane in America half so beautiful as many of these approaches to an Icelandic farm house. Hedge clippers, boards and concrete do not make for true beauty. These walls become a portion of the ground, permanent affairs that do not need attention and stand for centuries. The Icelandic farmer can show the New England Yankee how to build a fence, but then he has the material in the toughest of turf. A fence in New England built of native sods would not endure as long as the frail brush fences of our hillside pastures. At the far end of the lane stands the *hús*. This term refers not only to the actual dwelling but to all the buildings within the enclosure whether for man or beast. This turf wall runs around the buildings so as to make an inner plot where no entrance to the mowing lands can be obtained by the live stock.

On dismounting we were cordially received. Our ponies were unladen and taken to the pasture by a boy. The house maids,—a proper distinction for there are house-maids and farm-maids with corresponding duties,—busied themselves in preparing the guest room and the tiny bedroom leading out of it for our accommodation. In a short time the table was spread with rye bread, unsalted butter, cheese, broiled *char,* a species of trout from the lake, warm milk and boiled eggs. To this repast we did ample justice. Then followed a pot of excellent coffee and a platter laden with a variety of dainty cakes. This is one of the better class of Icelandic farms. We were still on the great highway of Iceland and under the influence of the capital city. The house had wood floors, Norway spruce, polished and

aged to a beautiful seal-brown and spotlessly clean. We took our packing boxes into our bedroom as was our custom until we became better acquainted with the character of the people. The bedroom was eleven feet by five. In it was a small table, washstand, three chairs, four packing cases and two beds. When the heavy riding boots were removed there was not much room left in which to turn. The outer room contained a small dining table, an organ, several chairs and many ornaments of local interest in the shape of pictures. Every Icelandic home, no matter how humble, has its photograph album, long since filled and the overflow is spread upon the wall.

Supper over, I visited the out-buildings, which are entirely of stone and turf, except the roof contains timber to give the necessary support for the brush and turf. Near the coast and in the north this timber is obtained from the Arctic driftwood and I have seen many a stick of Siberian larch that has undoubtedly drifted over the polar area and lodged upon this coast. Thus does nature provide an abundance of building material in a land where no timber grows. I examined the haying implements with considerable interest and then followed the brook up the hillside in quest of flowers. Reclining upon a bed of the "mountain bloom" I looked down upon the farm, across the *tún* to the lake and beyond to the ragged peaks. The smoke rose from the peat fire in the kitchen, bringing with it the pleasing odor of burning humus, the farm maids were busy with the milking and the men were swinging their scythes in the meadow, albeit it was half past nine at night. This then is Iceland, the land of my boyhood dreams. These are the home-dwellers, who are not city-struck nor crazed with the lust of gold. These are the people of sturdy ways and simple lives whom I am to know in the years to come.

"Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor."

The two beds were placed end to end on one side of the room. Each was five feet long and not over two and a half in width. How these six-foot men can sleep in any comfort in five-foot beds is a mystery. The mattress is a well stuffed feather bed, the coverlet is of eider down. The down is stuffed into a tick like a pillow and like a pillow it has a white case. One virtually sleeps between two feather beds. In the nightly struggles to kick the foot board out of my short bed, the overgrown pillow, used as a blanket, often fell to the floor and sometimes as a last resort to straighten out, I followed the coverlet to the floor, used it for a mattress and with a steamer rug slept in peace.

Nine in the morning found us at breakfast. An hour later, having paid our host his modest reckoning, with handshaking all round and a hearty *góðr á daginn,* pronounced as though spelled *go-an-dine,* meaning literally "good to the day," an ancient Scandinavian salutation and universal in Iceland for centuries, we started to *Thingvellir.* After riding for half an hour over the barren plain thickly studded with fragments of the ancient basalt and with eyes steadfastly fixed upon the beauties of the lake, we came to the brink of a mighty chasm. Below our feet is the plain of *Thingvellir,* the Mecca of Iceland, the seat of the ancient parliament, the resultant of the combined freakishness of earthquake and volcanic forces. It is a remarkable geological formation. The sunken plain is nearly ten miles long and five miles broad.

We stand on the brink of the *Almannagjá,* All-Men's-Rift, so named because in ancient days when the nobles and law-makers were assembled in the plain below, the

common people met upon the heights along the brink of this chasm for a great national holiday of about two weeks. To our right, south-west, the sunken valley is filled with the waters of the lake. To the left, north-east, rises the abrupt wall of *Ármannsfell,* a lofty mountain of trap. To the south-east, five miles away and extending from the far side of the lake to *Ármannsfell* is the *Hrafnagjá,* Ravens-Rift. This rift is parallel with the one upon whose brink we are now standing. The sunken plain varies in the depth of its depression from twenty-five feet at the north-east to over a hundred feet at the south-west, below the level of the surrounding moorland. The plain itself is rent, rifted and shattered into thousands of fragments as if hot water had been dashed against a plate glass window on a frosty morning. Hundreds of chasms intersect each other in the sunken plain in a huge network. They go deep down to the bed of the lake and the lake follows them up under the lava and the water glimmers at the bottom of these chasms.

How was this formation wrought? In prehistoric times, that is before Iceland was discovered, how much earlier we do not know and the rocks do not reveal the secret save the probable period of the flowing of the lava itself which filled all the valley, the surface cooled and the fluid below this crust was under pressure and forced a passage through the barrier where the lake now lies and drained away. This left a mammouth cavern with a hot, laminated, blistered and shrinking roof. Time passed. The shrinking continued. The stress became sufficient to produce the great fault, an earthquake, and in one mighty tumble the entire roof of the lava chamber collapsed, breaking away from the walls which now form the moorland side of the great parallel rifts. As it fell it was shivered into acre-sized fragments, tilted and turned so as to

present a billowy appearance. Time has mercifully clothed the ragged mass with verdure, tangled masses of dwarf birch, which, from the distance of the brink upon which we stand, soften the harsh outlines and partially obscure the chasms. As the roof of the cavern fell it broke away from the mountain walls on either side of the plain and pulled the ragged mass with it. This formed a second wall and between these two walls runs the *Álmannagjá* on this side of the plain and the *Hrafnagjá* on yonder side. From the top of the inner walls the slope is gradual down into the plain, much like the inward sloping sides of a platter. On the moorland side enormous niches extend into the wall and protruding from the second wall are masses of lava pulled out of these places which would exactly fit the ancient matrix could they be restored. These are so numerous in each of the rifts that there is no doubt as to the correctness of our view of the formation of the rifts and of *Thingvellir*.

Over the brink of the tableland and into the *Álmannagjá* tumbles a fine sheet of water, the *Öxerá*, Axe-River, which follows the chasm down to a break through the inner wall, spreads over a portion of the plain and enters the lake. At our feet there is a narrow side passage leading from the brink down into the rift which has been laboriously levelled and a good road now leads to the lower level. This pass in ancient days was the stragetic point of many a stout fight. In the *Burnt Njal* we read a vivid description of such a fight when the issue of the trial was unfavorable to one of the factions.

We will now ride down the incline, cross the bridge over the foaming *Öxerá* and draw rein at the *Valhöll*, Great-Hall-of-the-King. This was erected when King Frederick of Denmark visited the place in 1907. That the good king toured a portion of Iceland at this time

is a blessing to travellers because special roads were built, bridges erected and inns constructed for his accommodation.

We turned the ponies over to Johannes who took them to the pasture upon the moorland above the rift. It was only eleven in the morning and we had ridden but an hour yet we decided to spend the day in a further examination of this historic spot. The time allotted proved inadequate and a year later, on our return from the north, we passed an entire day here. Less than half a dozen people were stopping at the *Valhöll*. We were assigned a room like a beach bath house with two bunks, one above the other as in a steamer. We did not know till the next summer that this hotel had first, second and third class lodgings. It was the only place in Iceland where we ever found any distinction. On our second summer we had first class accommodations, which meant a large comfortable room with a regulation bed and the meals served privately in the adjoining room in place of on a bench in the large hall.

Immediately we set out to explore the place. A mist was creeping in from the lake and down from the mountains. This soon developed into a "Scotch mist" which is an easy falling rain. We went to the *Öxerá*, explored the deep rift between the walls, which in places has been fenced off for sheep cotes. We climbed the wall to the top of the falls, peered down into the numerous fissures and were astonished to find snow at the bottom of one of them. It is a narrow chasm, very deep and the sun can not reach the bottom. We followed the wall eastward for two miles where we found a place to descend into the plain. On the return we wandered among the crevasses, dodging blocks of lava and jumping the narrow rifts where down a hundred feet the water glimmered. We returned in the rain for our mid-afternoon meal which consisted of broiled

trout from the lake. It rained vigorously and we devoted some time to the neglected notebooks, also to an examination of the guest book. They do not use registers, simply a book in which the parting guest writes his name and any comments he chooses. There is an old Icelandic proverb which runs as follows,—

> *Island er hin besta land sem sól skina uppi*
> Iceland is the best land on which the sun comes up. (shines).

This was quoted over one of the signatures. A little later some one had written an addition in German,—*"and the rain rains."*

At five in the afternoon the clouds broke away, the sun came smilingly forth and we continued our exploration. We visited the ducking pool, where in ancient days women convicted of heinous crimes were drowned. This is a big noisy basin within the *Álmannagjá* a little way below the falls. Well would it have been with the noble *Gunnar* had *Halgerða* been dipped in this cauldron ere ever he became fascinated with her beauty and caught in her toils. We crossed to the borders of the lake where there is a small *tún,* the *Thingvellir* parsonage. An ancient church stands within the enclosing walls of the *tún.* We obtained the key of the pastor and entered. Until a few years ago the churches throughout the country were turned over to travellers for sleeping quarters. This was a most excellent arrangement as they afforded plenty of room and were always well ventilated. Some English sportsmen once amused themselves by throwing their boots at the candles on the altar and committing other acts of vandalism and the Bishop of Iceland very wisely forbade the future use of the churches as accommodations for travellers. This has put many people to inconvenience since, not only the traveller but the farmer or pastor who has had

to discommode himself to find room in an already overcrowded house. Thus do many people suffer for the wanton acts of a few and a nation gets a bad name because of the deeds of a few of its reckless sons. Until *Valhóll* was erected the pastor at this place cared for the strangers if they were without a tent. What a relief to him has been this little hospice. This parsonage figures prominently in the *Prodigal Son,* which is Hall Cain's best work on Iceland. It should be read by all who contemplate a visit to this land or are interested in the country. When he wrote the *Bondman* he had never been in Iceland and he wrote entirely from imagination and without any local color. This was severely criticised in Iceland and so much fuss was made over the misrepresentations and erroneous paragraphs that Cain visited the country, thoroughly explored the vicinity of *Reykjavik* and then wrote *The Prodigal Son* which redeemed himself in the eyes of the people. Icelanders are quite sensitive about misrepresentations made by foreigners. Above all other things the Icelander dreads to be laughed at, scorns falsehoods about himself and his country and is jealous of its reputation. This is deep seated patriotism.

The little church contains a very old altar piece, a *Last Supper,* painted on wood. The altar itself was constructed in 1683. In the yard there is a monolith of lava erected by man. On its eastern face there are several parallel marks cut deeply into the stone. Like the standard *Meter* kept in Paris and the standard *Yard* in London, these lines marked the standard *alin,* ell, measure of linear distance in the ancient days. It is supposed to be of the tenth century. The measures of the country were adjusted by this standard. Thus the Scandinavians fixed a standard of measurement centuries before Great Britain adopted its arbitrary and unscientific measure or the arc of a meridian had been

measured for the French scientific standard.

A little way from the parsonage and beside the recently constructed road is the *Lögberg,* Mount-of-Laws. Let us ascend it, note the surroundings and recall the past. When the plain fell to its present irregular level and was shattered into hundreds of misshapen masses, here by the lake two of the chasms, like the arcs of intersecting circles, enclosed a long oval fragment of lava which stood high above the surrounding level and overlooked the lake. This is the Law Mount. One of these rifts is known as the *Flosigjá.* At one point the walls approach within eighteen feet and it is said that when the burner of *Njal,* Flosi, was hotly pursued by his enemies he leaped this chasm. These chasms, through which an underground river finds its way into the lake, are very picturesque with their lichen encrusted walls, with the crowberry in the niches and the wild thyme hanging over the brink. In the old days it was possible to reach the engirdled mount at only one place. This made it easy of defense and secure to the lawgivers and judges against intrusion by the populace. Frosts and earthquakes have pried off many an angular fragment into the gulf and the place is now easy of access.

Standing on the grassy mound the great wall of *Almannajgá* reaches its black mass from the border of the lake to *Armansfell,* the *Öxerá* plunges in one long white curve over the brink, boils musically within its distant canyon and reappears through the rent in the side of the inner wall flecked with foam. Beyond the moorland *Súlur,* Stone-Pillars, rears his pinnacles of basalt. *Thingvallavatn* smiles at our feet. No sail dots its brilliant surface, no houses border its precipitous shore. It is the same as when the *Saga* heroes fished in its bright depths and these graceful swan and busy ducks enjoy the same tranquility as their remote

ancestors. Around the lake a ring of red and purple peaks, robed in transparent atmosphere and embellished with hues unknown in lower latitudes, peep into this molten glimmerglass to behold each others image, while, amid the distance-softened ridges, *Hengill* sends upward its "columns of white vapor like altar smoke" towards the softened sky. The embosomed isles are skirted with green and at the waters edge are fringed with the aromatic *Angelica.* Uncounted peaks are around us surpliced with white raiment as though assembled to raise one grand anthem to Nature's God.

Let us turn back the pages of time 800 years. We stand upon the upper portion of the *Lögberg,* upon the bloodstone, where the backs of criminals were broken before they were hurled into the abyss at our feet. The Thingmen are in solemn assembly a little lower down the incline. Along the brink of *Almannajgá* throng the populace in assembled thousands in their annual August festival, gathered from every portion of the island. They await the issue of some vital subject under discussion on the mound. It is the year 1112 and the trial for the Burning of Njal is well under way. That old man with the quiet mien and full flowing beard is Mord. He rises, faces the Court and says,—

"I take witness to this, that I take a Fifth Court oath. I pray God so to help me in this light and in the next, as I shall plead this suit as I know to be most truthful, and just, and lawful. I believe with all my heart that Flosi is truly guilty in this suit, if I may bring forward my proofs; and I have not brought money into this court in this suit, and I will not bring it. I have not taken money and I will not take it, neither for a lawful nor for an unlawful end."

The great trial proceeds but a flaw is found in the pleading and the technicality destroys all that has been gained. Now men rush to their weapons and Flosi

would gain the Great Rift as a place of defense. Snorri, the Priest, forsees the outcome and has quietly stationed another hardy band at this vantage point. The throng upon the moorland press to the brink to watch the fierce fight waged by the contending factions, who attempt to settle at the point of the spear the question which has just failed in the court. Might is still right. Doughty blows are showered as Odin chants the warsong under the shields of his few remaining warriors. Spear and battle axe ring loudly upon shield and helmet. The verdict is rendered. The decree is written in blood upon the grass. A prolonged shout of acclamation mingled with the roar of disapproval rises from the multitude. The clamor dies away, for the sturdy bodies of these iron heroes, who can give and take such blows, can endure no longer and the struggle ends with lifelong feuds.

Upon the sunken plain along the banks of the *Öxerá* stand the booths of the prominent Thingmen, the priests, the chieftains and the poets. To these the people assemble in noisy factions to cool their blood in long draughts of mead. See, there by the snowy falls near to the perpendicular wall is the booth of Snorri. Down the river a little distance is the booth where Njal so often gave counsel ere the burning; there by the lake is the booth of the fair and treacherous Hallgerða. It was here that Gunnar first spied her sitting in the doorway fresh from her bath in the lake. The bloodshed is not quite over, look where the river foams through its rocky jaws, leaping in two great bounds for the lake, impatient for *its* victims. In that surging eddy within the rift that group of women convicted of infanticide and adultery are now to be drowned and on that mound where those fagots of birch are piled that witch is to be burned.

The 800 years are passed. The writer stands at

eventide alone upon the *Lögberg* and views with enchanted eye this perfect painting of peace let down from heaven. Mammoth and angular masses, their roughness softened with thyme and forget-me-nots, surround the age-old chasms and live anew in those Nile-green depths. Peaceful it is beyond the power of description. Here the sturdy Viking, wealthy with the spoils of Europe, worked out a constitution, founded a republic, sloughed off the skin of paganism, adopted on the first ballot the Christ-law and crystallized a civilization centuries since. Here in the old and stirring days great minds held sway. What sturdy men they were, mighty in feats of arms, resourceful, inventive, poetic, pregnant with the germs of thought that in their latter day development produced a scholastic, peaceful, Christian nation! What wondrous deeds they wrought, what grand old epics they enacted, let their Sagamen relate.

Beautiful Arctic flowers crown the *Lögberg*. The plover whistles on the heather and the whimbrel calls as in days of yore. Around this primitive parliament flow the emerald waters in varied shades of prismic green like polished malachite, long since unpolluted with broken-backed criminals.

I fired my revolver into the green-bedded chasm of the *Flosigjá* to awaken the echoes. Their voices betokened peace. The angry snarl of the bloodthirsty mob, the clash of bill on yielding armor, the wail of drowning women no longer reverberated from chasm to cliff. Echo had but one message, *Peace*.

Peace to the generations past, whose warriors have long since mouldered in yonder heath! Solemnly, softly, silently the echo fades upon *Thingvellir's* plain. So say I.—Peace to the mighty dead! Peace to the little nation now toiling for existence upon this fire-blistered

Foot of the Öxerá in Almannagjá.

Lögberg, Mount of Laws, between the Rifts. Ármannsfell in the Distance.

island! Peace, I say, to those Plutonic forces that have wrought far greater havoc and misery in this Arctic realm than all the bloody passions of its first born sons!

CHAPTER VIII

GEYSIR

"Where the cauldron of the North
Spouts his boiling waters forth,
From the caverns far beneath,
Where they ever lie and seethe,
And with steam, and hiss, and boom,
Send a tremor through the gloom,
Till, above, the solid ground
Vibrates with a dull rebound,—
  In that place I stood and saw
  Things that filled my soul with awe."
—*Miss Menzies.*

MORNING dawned with a gentle rain. Hour after hour it fell with no promise of abatement until ten, when the clouds were rifted, the sun shone through and the dripping plain glistened. We decided to set out for the long ride to *Geysir*. The ponies had been in readiness for an hour in anticipation of an earlier start.

We turned into the trail leading across the plain, along the border of the lake towards *Hrafnagjá*, Johannes following with the train at some distance. When we reached the rift we halted to examine it until Johannes arrived. This chasm is longer than the *Almannagjá* but not so deep and surely not so impressive. It lacks the beautiful waterfall and the historical associations of the latter. It extends along the side of the mountain which we were about to climb. Many blocks of basalt have tumbled into it in one place and over these a suitable and safe passage has been constructed. As we crossed the chasm the rain began to fall, likewise the temperature. Long before we had reached the summit of the mountain pass the rain was pouring upon us and rolling off in rivulets from horse and rider. This was

a good test of our specially made waterproof clothing and it stood the test. Never a drop penetrated save up the sleeve of the bridle hand.

At the summit, the clouds scattered again; this time in earnest and we experienced no more rain during the long trip. It was just one long and glorious summer day and we wandered care-free in full enjoyment of the wonderful country. Near the summit we passed a lonely little farmhouse and the people being absent in the hayfield the lonesome dog came out to make our acquaintance.

At this place the trail winds through an exceedingly rough area of lava, tangled and twisted. It was my first experience with recent volcanic products and it was with absorbing interest that I examined this material, as the ponies climbed the steep gradient and threaded the narrow path through the labyrinth of angular blocks. Above our heads rose a line of peaked and jagged volcanoes, *Kálfstindar,* Calf-Peaks. This place has been the center of considerable volcanic activity as evidenced by the different forms of lava, i. e. lava of different periods of eruption also by the weathering piles of tufa and conglomerate. Near the trail there is a peculiar formation, a *tintron.* This is a volcanic chimney, rising about nine feet out of the lava plain. The opening at the top is in the form of an ellipse and the tube extends forty feet down into the solid lava. The sides are blistered and it has the appearance of having been a blow-hole from which thin lava was thrown upward in the form of a fountain as water from the nozzle of a hose. There are several of these unique formations in the north which will be discussed when we reach *Mývatn.*

Soon after leaving the *tintron,* the trail wound downward along the side of the mountain and under projecting cliffs of tufa and brought us suddenly in

view of the fair valley of *Laugardalr,* Valley-of-the Hot-Springs. An entrancing panorama was spread out at our feet. The luxuriant green of the valley contrasted strangely with the scorched and blistered barriers over which we had been climbing. In the distance a smiling lake of no mean proportions cut a large space out of the meadows. On the nearer and the farther shore of *Laugarvatn,* Hot-Spring-Lake, rose columns of steam in slender spirals quivering in the breeze and vanishing in the upper air. Numerous sheep and cattle marked the valley with dots of white and brown. Besides the nearer hot springs clustered a group of farm buildings and the distance caused their turf roofs to appear like tiny hillocks. This lake and valley appear like a monstrous chrysoprase in a grand setting. The valley is enclosed by the needle spires of the volcanoes which are red, brown, yellow and gray and streaked with a mixture of all these colors on their naked slopes where the melting snows have swept down many an avalanche of ash and cinder.

We descended by a steep path to the lower level, passing many a towering pile of conglomerate of soft texture and wading through many a talus of ash and sand where the myriads of zeolites glistened. The masses of rock protruding from the tufa cliffs give them the appearance of huge plum puddings. Reaching the verdant plain we changed ponies and while waiting for them to graze, we explored a small cavern in the base of the cinder pile. This cave has long been used as a retreat for the sheep in times of storm. It has since been cleaned, a turf dwelling erected before its entrance and it now forms the home of a young Icelandic couple who have set up their housekeeping here since our visit. Remounting we sped away over the meadow, crossing many small brooks and arrived at the farm by the hot springs. This place has many

signs of prosperity, such as the quality of the buildings, the numerous flocks around the lake, the abundance of hay and the thrifty patch of potatoes in its special turfed enclosure. We were cordially welcomed, taken to the guest room and served with hot coffee, milk, pastry and delicious griddle cakes, large in area and quite thin, buttered while hot, sprinkled with sugar and then rolled tightly. We found these griddle cakes at many of the farms and can cordially recommend them to a dainty appetite. At the close of the lunch we repaired to the hot springs which always had for us an unfailing interest. They are at the very edge of the lake and have formed small mounds of silicious scinter mingled with lime and alum. Wherever the hot water has fallen upon the land there is an incrustation of fantastic form. Most of the water boils over into the cold water of the lake. The spring furnishes hot water for all domestic purposes and is a great conserver of fuel. The clothes are washed in tubs beside the springs and then rinsed in the lake. Here the wool is cleansed before shipment. In the hot ground the bread is baked, the dough being enclosed in earthen jars. In a fuelless country it is a gift. It is a strange contrast this pouring out of boiling water in the margin of the cold lake.

We hastened across the meadow along the border of the lake to regain the trail leading to *Geysir*. Hasten is the correct word. No air was stirring and the clouds of tiny *mý*, midges, that rose out of the long grass as the ponies disturbed them, simply smothered us. They filled the ears of the ponies, crowding in with the long hair and swarmed in patches upon their flanks and legs. Instances are related where the midges so tormented the ponies that they rushed into the water, in spite of the protestations of the riders, that they might get rid of their tormenters. No horse of my know-

ledge has his ears so completely filled with hair as the Icelandic pony. Doubtless this is an adaptation for a special purpose and I believe that purpose was to protect these delicate organs from these stinging insects. We drew forth our fly veils and put them on with some relief, but as we did it while at a full gallop they were not securely fastened and some of the pests got under the netting. Here they were happy, for we could not drive them away. In desperation I pulled off my veil, for the express purpose of giving all the midges an equal chance. It needed no urging to put the ponies to their best paces, for they well understood that the insects would leave us when we had attained an elevation above the meadow.

We entered a tract of scrubby willow and dwarf birch. Some of the birches were as high as our shoulders while we were on horseback and thus we rode with our heads protruding above the Icelandic forest and there was some free advice given about getting lost in the woods. There are two or three larger forests in the north which we shall visit later. We passed several good farms and every one, men, women and children were busy with the hay harvest. Two hours riding took us to *Miðdalr,* Middale, church, which is close to the famous *Brúará,* Bridge-River. Many streams rush out of the mountain gullies and unite up this side valley. Here the *Brúará* comes foaming down its shelving bed in a passion. Near the crossing it spreads out in a wide sheet over the lava which is full of ugly crevasses. One great rift, of unknown depth, and five feet wide extends through the center of this lava and the river tumbles into it from both sides. Tumbling into lava rifts is a characteristic of Icelandic rivers, some of them entirely disappear. Until the coming of King Frederick in 1907 the traveller rode his pony through the water for about one hundred

feet, carefully avoiding the cracks, with the water well up the flanks of the pony. When the rift was reached it was crossed on planks bolted to the rock and often with the water flowing over them. When safely across the "bridge" another passage of one hundred feet through the water brought the traveller once more upon dry ground. This is why it is called "bridge river." A suspension bridge now spans the stream and the view up the river is excellent. In former days it required some steadiness of purpose to thread this tangled maze of cracks beneath the white water and ride the plank over the foaming stream, and yet, I am sure, I would prefer it to the crossing of the *Ölfusà* which we made two weeks later.

Here we encountered a large party of Icelanders with numerous pack ponies laden with provisions, timber, and strangest of all, huge piles of fish heads with attached vertebrae. The party had been down to the coast to dispose of their wool and were returning with their supplies for the summer. When the fish are dressed the heads and backbones are cut out and hung upon the fences to dry. In the interior they are pulverized and used for food whenever provisions are short. In the spring when hay becomes scarce fish are often fed to the livestock.

Passing the farm, *Utlið,* the *out-folk* or the people beyond, we wound around the shingly side of *Bjarnafell,* Bear-Mountain,* and descended to the plain which proved to be a bog saturated with the recent rain. Lord Dufferin in his *Letters from High Latitudes* calls this place "an Irish bog." The crossing was anything but pleasant for the ponies. Many deeply worn trails crossed the plain towards *Geysir.* Under ordinary conditions of dryness any one of these ditches would have

**Fell* is an isolated mountain while *fjall* is the termination applied to a mountain showing that it is a portion of a group or a range.

been satisfactory to the ponies, but partly filled with mud the ponies shied at them and without any warning frequently jumped out of one and into another before the rider was aware of what was about to happen. It is in places of this character that the instinct and experience of the pony is more serviceable than the judgment of his rider. It is in the bog, on the rough mountain trail and in the foaming river that the true worth and peculiar qualities of the Icelandic pony is revealed. The ponies prefer the old ruts which often are worn so deeply that his flanks rub the turfed edges and the rider must pay special attention to his own feet if he would not have them jammed into the turf at the angles of the intersecting trails. Attempt to get the pony out of the rut and on to what the rider assumes is a better path, the turf, and the mettle of the steed is immediately aroused. It requires a strong pull upon the rein and a dig of the heel into the ribs of the pony to get him out of the path he has chosen. As soon as this is accomplished to the satisfaction of the rider and he settles down in the saddle conscious of his superior wisdom over the brute creation, without the least warning the pony takes a side step which lands him in the bottom of the forbidden trail. After a few of these unexpected rebuffs the rider is content to let the pony have the choice of trails providing it leads in the general direction of the rider's choice.

In the distance we saw columns of steam rising from a large area and Johannes assured us that it was from the geysers. It was here that we met an acquaintance from the *Laura,* Mr. A. V. Manneling, a banker from Helsingfors in Finland, whose company had been very agreeable on the voyage from Leith to *Reykjavik.* He informed us that *Geysir,* (pronounced gáy-sir,) had erupted that noon and would probably give another exhibition that evening. We bade him good-bye and

hastened on in order to be present during the eruption. A century ago *Geysir* was quite constant in the periods of its eruption but owing to recent earthquakes which have changed the conditions below it is not at all regular and it is frequently eight days between the displays. We forded several tributaries of the *Túngufljót,** Tongue-River, rounded the base of *Laugarfell,* Hot-Mountain, and rode into the midst of the steaming acres, the cite of great *Geysir* and his satelites, a place of awful magnificence, where the water,—

> "* * hot, through scorching cliffs is seen to rise
> With exhalations steaming to the skies!"
>
> —*Iliad.*

We dismounted at the little inn, which is located in the midst of the boiling and spouting caldrons, glad to leave the saddle after a ride of thirty-five miles across a diversified country. It had been our second day in the saddle but we had become accustomed to the ponies and they had discovered that the riders were their masters. We had had an exceedingly pleasant journey with no discomforts except those attendant upon horeback riding through a rough and roadless country.

This little inn was another creation for the benefit of the King and again we rejoiced that his visit to Iceland preceded ours. There are four rooms on the ground floor, one for dining and the other three for bedrooms. The cooking is done in a little house slightly removed towards the mountain. Formerly all travellers to *Geysir* took tents with them for use at this place or hired them of the farmer at *Haukadalr,* Hawk-dale. The Inn was crowded. There was a large company of

**Fljót* and *á* each mean *river* but there is the same distinction between them as between *river* and *brook. Fljót* is a large river with broad lake-like expansions and *á* is an ordinary stream.

Icelanders out for a holiday besides several Danes, Germans and those lovers of the *Laura,* the Swede and the Icelandic maiden. We encountered them several times during the summer and they were having a happy time. It appeared to be a honeymoon preceding the bridal. There was a prolonged conversation between Johannes and the keeper of the Inn in which Johannes expressed himself quite forcibly if we could judge by the determination in his voice. He appeared to be the victor, for he came to us with a beaming face and showed us into one of the corner rooms next to *Geysir.* Our luggage was brought in, a steaming supper of boiled mutton, potatoes, milk, coffee and black bread was set before us. That Icelandic coffee! The berries are freshly roasted every morning, they are of prime quality, the brewing is expertly done, the cream is real and,—well, it is delicious. Throughout the country it is the same. Halt at a farmhouse at any time in the day and you are invited to *Coffee.* It is coffee with every meal and frequent potations between meals. In that land the coffee ghost has never risen to be cried down with a score of cereal concoctions. Prepare it here freshly and expertly as they do and there is no reason why conscience should peer over the brim of the steaming cup to bid us beware of the snare of its fragrance.

We were hungry but our curiosity concerning the locality made short work of the supper. We then learned that the discussion in which Johannes became so energetic was precipitated by his stipulation that no one was to use the room except ourselves. In it there were three single beds, bunks built against the wall, and provisions for several more in the middle of the room when occasion required them. We did not know the Icelandic custom, that several men, women and children, whether known to each other or not, sleep in

the same room without any inconvenience. The innkeeper did not understand why this custom should be broken to the inconvenience of the many people who desired shelter that night. We learned more of this custom as our experiences multiplied and we will give the reader a full account in a later chapter.

This place is marked on the map of Iceland as *Geysir.* The word is from the verb *geysa,* "to rush forth furiously, to burst out with violence." It is not applied to all the spouting springs of boiling water as is *geyser,* the geological term, but is the name of the king of all the spouting springs in Iceland. Scores of these springs are located in this place but each has a special name which is appropriate to some physical peculiarity, such as *Strokr,* the churn, the tube where the water rises, falls and boils vigorously as the cream rose and fell with a frothy splutter in the ancient dash churn. When we think of the geysers of New Zealand, the Yellowstone National Park or any place in Iceland we must remember that they took this name from *Geysir.* There is only one *Geysir.*

The area dominated by the springs is directly at the foot of *Laugarfell,* indeed the south side of this mountain once formed a portion of the hot section. This portion of the mountain is void of every trace of vegetation, it is marked by ruined geyser mounds, smeered with sticky clay of many colors, punctured with tiny fumaroles whence issue wavering wands of steam, while in many places rivulets of hot water break through the pasty crust. The area of real activity is about 3,000 feet by 1,800 feet. The place is strewn with fragments of geyserite and bits of wood, straw and metal, thinly encrusted with the mineral deposit from the springs. Cast a stick, a straw or a bit of paper where the spray will fall on it and in a day it will have become petrified and cemented to the rock beneath. The en-

tire substratum is intensly heated, the ground is in a constant tremor which often accelerates to a gentle quake. Far down below these hissing, silicious tubes there is unknown latent heat. For ages the thermal capacity of this place has been sufficient to eject untold millions of tons of superheated water, at frequent intervals, in large installments from these stupendous safety valves.

We roamed over the section several times with our attention always fixed on *Geysir* and ready at the slightest warning to dash madly towards it should it condescend to favor us with a manifestation of its power. In the meantime we plugged the tube of a little geyser with turf and then stood aside to listen to the heavy gurgle of reproach which rattled in its throat and to witness the vomiting of boiling water to a height of twenty-five feet. As soon as it got relief we plugged it up again and as often as we administered the turf so often did it eject it. It was midnight and Mrs. Russell had long since retired, but the weirdness of the place held sleep aloof from my eyes. In company with a German I wandered over the area again, stood on the rim of *Geysir* to watch our shadows in its depths hoping for the occasion to arise for us to chase those shadows headlong up the mountain slope. We returned to the little spouter and played like a couple of boys. As a parting shot we decided to give it an extra amount of turf and to ram it down the barrel with a pole. We did this with so much success that we waited long for the discharge but there was none. We had loaded it too well. The tube of our gun was too strong to burst, the wadding was packed too tightly for the powder to blow it out. Silently we sat by it for an hour when my companion said,—

" Geyser schlaft."

To which I replied,—"Ich will schlafen."

The day after the following it burst out with a fine jet of water at six in the morning and spouted without interruption till nine when we rode away. As we passed over the ridge we looked back and the last sight we had of this place was the top of a column of water pouring from this tube. The extra charge of turf was well worth the trouble.

Morning came but *Geysir* had not erupted. Its surface betrayed no signs of past disturbances and gave no promise for the future. From the neighboring farms we collected seventy pounds of bar soap which we cast into the center of the basin, where it immediately sank. We were told that during the day there would certainly be an eruption. The soap is kept here expressly for sale for this work. Ask an Icelander what the agency of the soap is and he will reply,—

"I do not know, it always does it and does it thoroughly." I venture the following explanation. Recalling that the accepted idea of the interior of a geyser is that of a large chamber of heated rock nearly filled with water and that below the water line there is a tube which bends down then upward into a chamber in the rock. The water becomes superheated. The steam and other gases in the dome of the chamber are under teriffic pressure on account of the great heat and the weight of the column of water above, (if one thinks of the geyser tube connecting the underground basin with the surface as the letter J). When the pressure in the dome over the water becomes greater than the downward force of the water in the long arm of the tube then there is an upward movement through the tube. The expanding steam throws out some of the water. This reduces the pressure on the superheated water in the basin and some of the water bursts into steam to continue the action. This process goes on till basin, tube, underground chamber and connecting

tubes are empty. Distant and cooler underground waters now rush in freely to refill the system and time produces a repetition. It is easy to construct glass apparatus in the laboratory to demonstrate this phenomenon. But what of the soap? This substance is composed of materials which quickly break down into hydrocarbon gases and increase the pressure in the chamber, just like oil spurted into the superheater of a water gas machine.

Many of the boiling springs, spurting jets and fumaroles are alike in this locality but three of them deserve special notice.

Blesi, Blaze, as the white stripe in a horse's face, is a charming grotto. It is a double basin connected with a tunnel just beneath a narrow bridge near the surface. These basins are about thirty feet deep. One is eighteen by twelve and the other thirty by twenty feet in the longest and shortest diameters respectively. The water is wonderfully transparent and the white silicious lining of the grottoes reflects from the sky the delicate shade of blue transforming it into a huge cavity of lapislazuli. *Blesi* is the traveler's friend. It provides hot water for the bath, cooks his food, warms his couch through the medium of the hot water bag and prepares his coffee. Many a leg of mutton, many a brace of birds and innumerable are the eggs that have been faithfully prepared with its friendly heat. It is an easy method of cooking. Fill a pail with eggs and submerge it till they are soft, medium or hard, the time required is the same as in the kitchen. Place the meat in a cloth bag and do the same. Dip up the water and pour it upon the freshly ground berries, lo! the coffee is prepared and your meal is ready. This spring never erupts but pours out a steady stream which flows down the slope to join the runway from *Geysir.*

Strokr is another hot spring with a tube ten feet in

diameter and over forty feet deep. In former days it was most accommodating and would always give an exhibition of its powers if a couple of bushels of turf were thrown into the tube. The response came in from five to forty minutes. It usually threw out the turf and ejected a column of water upwards of a hundred feet. Again and again would it hurl out the boiling water until its underground system was exhausted. Some years since a party of gentlemen, French I believe, desirous of obtaining an extra high spout threw many stones into the tube on top of the turf. The geyser siphon was doubtless broken or at least fractured so that superheated steam can not be stored, for *Strokr* spouts no more. It boils furiously all the time with dense clouds of steam and the water rises and falls in the tube in the most violent manner. In looking into the tube one is impressed with the idea that there are safer places, as it seems if *Strokr* were about to mount into the sky to challenge *Geysir* which has so long held the palm.

Geysir is the main attraction. The first mention of this phenomenon in literature is in the History of Norway written by *Saxo Gramaticus,* who lived between 1150 and 1206, so that it has been active for over seven centuries. It has built for itself a mound of geyserite many feet above the level of the plain and has the appearance of an inverted oyster shell in its series of terraces. This mound increases with each eruption by the addition of a film of salts held in solution in the boiling water. The spring is in the form of a saucer with the inward sloping side at an angle of thirty degrees. The diameter of this saucer is nearly seventy feet and the saucer is a true circle. Within a saucer there is a depression at the bottom, a ring to hold the cup. Within the center of *Geysir's* saucer there is an opening, ten feet in diameter, which extends straight down to

the depth of eighty-four feet. Beyond this the plumb will not go. Whether there are deeper ramifications of tubes or not is a matter of conjecture unless the explanation of geyser action above offered is correct. Again, the shape of *Geysir* is that of a funnel, i. e. a tube running downward from a flaring reservoir at the top. During the irregular periods between the eruptions, the water wells upwards in the center and overflows the rim of the basin through a foot square opening in the side. This opening has been shaped by the farmer of *Haukadalr* to confine the escaping hot water to one channel. The water is heavily charged with minerals in solution. An English analysis of a gallon of the water yielded the following:—

Sodium carbonate, ...	5.56	grains
Aluminum oxid, ...	2.80	"
Silica, ...	31.38	"
Sodium chlorid, ...	14.42	"
Sodium sulfate, ...	8.57	"
Total solids, ...	62.73	"

During eruptions large volumes of carbon dioxid and some hydrogen sulfid and a little free hydrogen are emitted. In 1909 my maximum recording thermometer was lowered to a depth of eighty feet and the temperature was 110C., or 230 degrees on the Fahrenheit scale.

Words convey but a meager idea of the magnificence of this geyser during eruption, or the awe with which it inspires the witness of its extraordinary display of power. It was six-thirty in the evening, eight hours after we had administered the emetic of soap. Not a cloud dimmed the blueness of the sky and no air was stirring. The glaciers of *Láng Jökull,* the long ice-covered

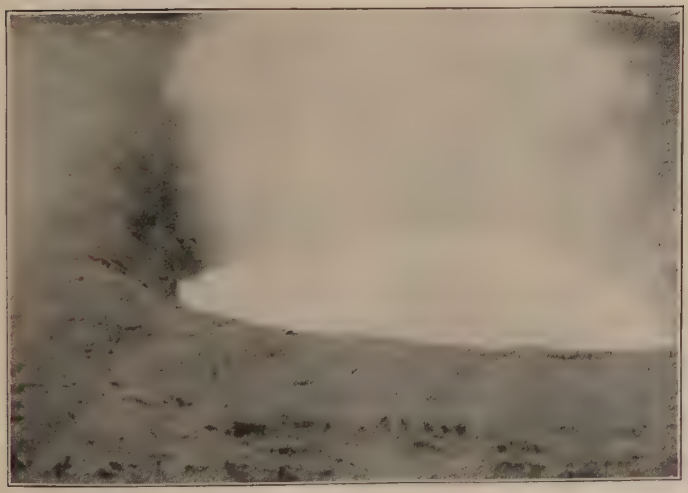
mountain, loomed beyond the plain of the *Hvitá,* White-River, the dome of *Hekla,* Hooded, had momentarily lost its cloud mantle, all the little geysers and fumaroles were boiling merrily and steaming furiously. Even quiet *Blesi* was sending up showers of carbon dioxid bubbles. The signs were favorable for an exhibition and the people were gathered close about the Inn in expectation. What the condition of the air has to do with the eruption, I do not suggest. Icelanders familiar with *Geysir* state that "when the wind is from the north there is never an eruption." I can only add that during our first eighteen hours at this place we had a strong wind from the north and no eruption.

We were at supper. The ground trembled, the building vibrated and a dull rumbling reached the ears.

"Geysir! Geysir!" rose the cry from within and without the building. The supper was never finished. Johannes, who had been watching for these first signs ever since we had administered the emetic, met us as we sprang to the doorway. Everyone rushed to the elevation across from *Geysir's* runway. Again the rumble, heavier than before. The water is agitated in the basin, it boils up suddenly, subsides, the earth beneath our feet trembles and a mass of steaming water rises in the center of the basin to an elevation of fifteen feet and overflows the rim with a noisy splash. Then all is quiet. Is this what we had travelled forty miles out of our way to see? Truly a great fuss for nothing. Is this the wonderful *Geysir* whose manifestation of power had caused the devout Henderson to fall upon his knees and to pour out his "soul in solemn adoration of the Almighty Author of nature, 'who looketh on the earth, and it trembled; who toucheth the hills, and they smoke?' " Does *Geysir* demand more tribute in soap? A few moments of quiet expectation followed. Then,

without further warning, a column of superheated water, ten feet in diameter, shot like a rocket into the air to the height of one hundred and twenty-five feet and the abysmal forces maintained that column for nine minutes. What a flood of water poured down the sloping cone! What a fountain! Mark Twain said that they "have real fountains in Eurpoe but in America they only leak." What would he have said could he have witnessed this display? The roar of falling water filled the air to the exclusion of all voices and flowed in hissing cascades down the slope, into the ravine and across the meadow to the river. The sheep fled before the advancing column of steam and from a distance gazed with a foolish stare at a spectacle that they had often witnessed. Volume upon volume of steam, like the cauliflower-shaped clouds of active Vesuvius, belched into the air expanding under the reduced pressure and filled the air to the shutting out of the sun. Fountains of foam well over the brink. Explosion follows explosion and still that lofty tower of boiling water stands erect and masses of water fall to earth with a terrific crash. The column wavers, totters, falls. The eruption is over, the steam clouds lift and we rush up the dripping slope of geyserite, step over the rim into the hot basin and peer down into these depths whence came those rivers of water. The heat penetrates the thick soles of the riding boots but we walk to the edge of the tube and gaze down into the sizzling throat of the monster. A mass of foam is over the bottom, eighty feet below. It rises, we watch its ascent of the tube with the pace of a fly up a wall. It reaches the junction of the tube with the bottom of the basin and we photograph it, just a mass of foam with ascending steam. It wells over into the basin and we retreat. Soon the basin is full and overflows normally and the only evidence of the change that has taken

Bridge River, Brúará, near Geysir.



The Tube of Geysir Filling, Photographed from within the rim of the Basin.

place is the dripping cone and the steam rising from the brook as it rushes to cool itself in the icy river.

During the eruption I caught a glimpse of a dark object in the steam which fell with a thud upon the grass. After the display and the basin had filled I sought that spot and found a mass of geyserite twelve inches square and two inches thick. It was still hot. It is perforated with steam tubes in every direction. I stowed it in the packing case and it is now in the Science Museum at Springfield, Mass.

At nine thirty that evening we were again treated to the same phenomenon by *Geysir* and again at six the following morning. Three magnificent ejections at a cost of only ten dollars worth of soap. It was worth much more. The final display was the finest of the three and lasted ten minutes. We were dressing when the cry of *"Geysir!"* again reached the Inn. What did it matter that the toilet was not finished! Travellers from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, America, Germany and distant parts of Iceland were there to see *Geysir* spout and not to be fastidious about coiffure and raiment. We all assembled hastily at the brink, each unconscious of the others' presence until the display was over. Then! What a startled and confused company! Several were clad only in sleeping costumes, some had put on one stocking and were holding a shoe and a stocking in the hand, some dragged a skirt by the band and still others trailed their pantaloons by the suspenders. One man held his shirt by the sleeve and had one leg in his trousers while the other was innocent of all clothing. There were Icelandic matrons and maidens barefooted, some with a skirt wrapped around them and others with a sheet. Rows of discarded garments marked the way from the Inn to the mound and during the retreat, which was a blushing and precipitous one, each caught from the grass the clothes that had

fallen during the advance. Ludicrous describes it well, but every one was happy and during the breakfast which followed the confusion was forgotten.

Standing upon the rim of the great basin and gazing at the azure surface the peacefulness of the scene belies the turbulence of the hour before. In the distance *Láng Jökull* glistens in the brilliant sunshine. Yonder, across the *Hvitá,* cloud-capped and snowy-mantled *Hekla* rises grand and lonely above its lava-wasted plain. Around us the numerous springs and fumaroles emit their endless columns of vapor and *Strokr* moans and groans. The little geyser which we packed with turf two nights ago has been spouting without interruption for two hours. What a contrast! Arctic ice and Plutonic fire battling for supremacy as they have done for ages in this land of strange confusion,—and still the conflict wages. Loth are we to turn from this manifestation of power and imposing grandeur of *Geysir,* even in his hours of rest, but *Gullfoss* lies beyond the *Túnguflójt,* the *Thjorsá* and the *Ölfusá* must be forded, *Hekla* challenges from the midst of his desolation, the peaceful pastoral plains of the south are calling, the weird and frightful solfataras of *Krisuvik* entice,—and we must saddle and away.

CHAPTER IX

GULLFOSS

A mighty rift within the rock
Rent ages since by earthquake shock,
  Where Hvitá's frenzied stream
Down plunges with the thunder's roar
Upon the canyon's basalt floor
  'Twixt walls of golden sheen,
With rainbows arching over all,—
It wins the name of *Golden Fall.*

—*R.*

IT requires an effort of the will to leave *Geysir.* There is a fascination in this heated area that like the sirens in Ulysses' tale. We mounted in the wind-driven spray of the little geyser and turned towards the *Túngufljót,* several tributaries of which had to be forded. The quicksands are frequent in these streams and must be avoided. Many ponies have foundered in them and brought their riders to grief. The grass plains are freely sprinkled with flowers and as we left the geyser region behind, the cottongrass, *Eriophorum angustifolium,* reappeared. This plant waves its white tassel in all the Icelandic meadows, sometimes so abundantly as to make the distant area appear like a patch of snow. It is entirely absent in soil that is under the influence of any of the hot springs. The meadows through which we passed are excellent grass lands and the hay harvest was in progress. The men were swinging the short scythe, the women raking and the boys and ponies carrying the bundles of hay to the stacks.

Gullfoss, Golden-Fall, is distant ten miles from *Geysir.* The trail leads over a very boggy country, especially after the crossing of the *Túngufljót.* A good bridge now spans the main river. It was a large and

merry cavalcade that spread out upon the rising ground in the bog above the river. All the guests at *Geysir,* satisfied with having seen the eruptions, were bent upon improving the opportunity to visit the famous falls. The section of bog, to which we have referred, is on an upland slope and it is filled with ruts, hummocks and moss sponges. The hummocks are crowned with several species of *Juncus,* the cotton-grass points out the moss sponges and the slimy algae locate the wettest spaces. The older ponies with eyes and nose alert always avoid the sloughs. If there is evidence of the recent passage of a pony, another will confidently follow. It is interesting to watch these little fellows sniffing the ground and testing it with the fore feet when no foot marks point a sure way. Leave the rein loose upon the neck, curb your impatience and trust the pony to keep out of a bog; urge him to take a short cut or to increase his chosen pace, and horse and rider are sure to become stuck in the bog, a bad predicament. Some English writers describe this passage as most difficult and dangerous. Take a local guide from *Haukadalr* and let no traveller who reaches *Geysir* forbear a visit to *Gullfoss* on account of the bog. The passage is not so very bad and the falls are worth much more than the effort.

At the summit of the hill, across the muddy area, we paused to view the scene below. The *Túngufljót* drains the southern slopes of *Láng Jökull,* its three great arms thrust downward through the alluvial plains, a mighty trident of hydraulic power, forced by the melting glaciers during the continuous shine of the summer sun. It is a delightful view,—the luxuriant green below crossed by the silver threads of the rivers, the whiteness of the glaciers across the valley and the steam clouds hovering over the heated area.

We turned to the north where the thunders of the

falls boomed from beyond the cliffs and the mists glistened high in the air. No falls, not even the river is visible, they are embedded in the canyon a mile beyond. The crashing roar of the water increased and turning an angle of the cliffs the steeds paused upon the brink of the *Hvitá* canyon. The full glory of the falls burst upon us radiant in its sheaf of rainbows. Leaving the ponies to graze upon the brink, we descended the crumbling wall to the level of the triangular area within the canyon. This grassy, mist-washed mass of rock is on a level with the top of the lower falls, the real plunge of the *Hvitá* into the lava abyss. As far as the mass of water is concerned this fall is the largest, not only in Iceland but in all Europe. Its rival, the *Dettifoss,* Drop-Falls, has a deeper canyon, a higher fall but there is not so great a mass of water. This waterfall is on the *Jökulsá,* Ice-Mountain-River, in the northeast of Iceland. The canyon of the *Hvitá* is V-shaped, about fifty feet wide at the top and not more than a dozen feet at the bottom. Most of the waterfalls in Iceland are formed, like the *Öxerá,* by a river falling into a *Gjá,* rift, from the side of the canyon. In the case of the *Gullfoss* the water falls into the end of the canyon, for this great rift begins at the falls. Just above the main falls the water rushes over a series of ledges, columnar basalt bluffs, fifteen hundred feet wide and fifty feet high. The space between these falls and the main plunge is short. Here the water runs wide and deep with a troubled surface, fretted with foam and impatient for the approaching plunge into the unfathomed depth.

A huge mass of rock divides the main falls at the top with about one hundred feet in width of water on each side. It is from this point that H. Rider Haggard in *Eric Brighteyes* causes the hero to descend into the canon of the *Hvitá* to swim to the lower end in order

to win the hand of Gudruðr, the Fair. Of all the strange and imaginative tales which this writer has related this is the most improbable. The water upon the brink of the two arms of the falls is eighty feet deep and the plunge into the canyon is not less than two hundred. What a water power and no syndicate to control it!

The true falls can not be photographed. The triangular plot upon which we have been standing is within the canyon and the walls rise above us to the height of about two hundred feet. Above us the palisaded buttresses, drenched with spray, glisten in the morning sun and hanging over the chasm frown upon the river below as if threatening to prevent its escape. The imprisoned waters boil and foam in their mad contention with the walls ragingly impatient of their restriction, anxious to escape to the rural calmness of the southern plains. So mighty is the mass of water, so narrow are the depths into which it hurls itself that one must believe that subterranean passages exist or the lava rift would fill and quickly choke itself to overflowing. It is possible that these hidden rifts, results of earthquakes, supply the water for the hot springs far away. Perhaps the ramifications of great *Geysir's* underground system reach even to the foot of this canon, even as one end of the drinking horn, out of which *Thor* drank in the halls of *Utgard-Loki,* was placed in the sea, so that *Thor* lost his wager by being unable to empty the horn at a single draught.

Grim, grand and glorious is the Foss, surpassing Niagara in scenic environment. Under suitable conditions Niagara has its well-known rainbow, but *Gullfoss* has several of them arching the waters one above the other in the dense volume of spray that is hurled two hundred and fifty feet above the surface of the stream. If the fabled pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow

arch is to be obtained anywhere, it must be sought for in this place, for within the walls of the upper canyon the rainbows end. One may pass through them and even stand at the springing of the prismatic arch if he is willing to take the drenching of the down-pouring floods of spray, like sheets of water in a New England thunder storm. Grand as is the *Gullfoss,* its setting is even more impressive. Above the plain *Láng Jökull* stretches forty miles across the horizon, lifting its unexplored surface of adamantine ice high in air, a perpetual challenge to him who would search the unknown. At its base and near at hand *Hvitávatn,* White-River-Lake, the source of the river, carries a fleet of icebergs upon its sun-lit surface. In the perpetual sunlight of Iceland's summer months this vast icefield discharges constant floods down its cliffs. Hence the *Hvitá* starts upon its turbulent course to the sea a full-grown river laden with glacial clay. Towards the east the peaks of *Kerlingafjáll,* Old-Woman-Peaks, arrest the eye, around whose skirts hot springs are scattered sending up a mass of vapor like incense to the heroic gods of Scandinavian mythology.

The thunders of *Gullfoss* diminished as we followed the brink of its canyon southward and descended into the stony waste of *Biskuptúngur,* Bishop's-Tongue, a tongue-shaped mass of fertile land in the valley of the *Túngufljót* formerly belonging to a bishop. Here the foaming of its silt-laden stream was the only evidence of the recent travail of the *Hvitá.* Of the twenty travellers in the party from *Geysir* all had returned except one, a German who stayed with us till we reached *Skipholt,* Ship-Ridge. On the way he told us of an amusing experience he had had with the Icelandic pony. During the first hour of his ride he wished to stop and repeatedly shouted "Whoa!" The pony only went the faster and finally ran away with him. He stated

that he had ridden horseback in many lands and no matter what language was spoken this was the first country where "whoa!" did not mean "stop." *Hót* or *hoa* is the Icelandic word at which a pony starts quickly into a trot or gallop and the sound so much resembles "whoa" that the pony was doing his best to be obedient.

About noon we regained the trail that leads from *Geysir* across the *Hvitá* towards *Hekla*. And again we found pleasure in the earlier visit of the King, for a good bridge has been constructed across the *Hvitá* at this place. This is one of the worst of the Icelandic rivers to ford and many people have been drowned in the attempt. A few miles through a delightful country brought us to *Skipholt* which we found to be a model farm. It is one of the best in Iceland. During the visit of the King in 1907 he was so well pleased with the conditions at this farm that he presented the owner with a medal in the form of a cross for the excellence of his work and the skill he had displayed in the construction of the buildings and in the management of his flocks and herds. It was the wish of the King that it might prove an incentive to the neighboring farmers to do their best to imitate their more prosperous neighbor.

It was Sunday and no work was in progress. We left the ponies in the lane and went up to the house where we received a cordial welcome and the farmer's wife set before us an excellent dinner. With a mixture of English, German and French we conversed for an hour over the dinner with our German companion who proved to be a professor at Berlin but spoke no English. The landlady beamed upon us, all the while conscious of our difficulties and had it not been for the Icelandic reserve I have no doubt that she would have proved a good interpreter. It was not till later that we discovered that many of these people can speak sev-

eral languages. The biscuit, pastry, griddlecakes, mutton and coffee were excellent as well as the butter, cheese and milk and it did seem, by other standards, as if we had eaten more than the value of twenty-five cents each, which was the charge.

At *Skipholt* there is an excellent set of buildings mostly made of wood, the turf walls are in prime repair, the fields free from stones and smooth, smoothness being a rare condition of Icelandic mowing fields, the flocks are large and the cattle numerous. It is the only farm in the country where I have seen running water supplied to the stables. I must add that there are other farms in the north which the King did not visit that are as prosperous as *Skipholt*. This was the best one that he visited. If he had gone to *Skútustaðir, Kalmungstúnga* or *Miklibaer* he would also have found praiseworthy conditions and no doubt would have rewarded, at least with a word of praise, the industrious farmers at these steads.

Bidding the *bondé* and the good-wife at *Skipholt* good bye and receiving in return their hearty *góðr á daginn* we turned towards *Hruni*. Our German companion continued southward to *Skalholt* and we left the road to climb the series of ridges between the valleys of the *Hvitá* and the *Laxá,* Salmon-River. The ponies picked their way over ridge after ridge of lava crags with alternate ascent and descent. In some places the declivities were so steep that it was difficult to retain our seat in the pommelless saddles. The surcingles were old and cracked and we put little trust in them. However, they held, else we would have experienced a very undignified descent. I have seen hundreds of saddles and bridles in Iceland and never have I seen a new one. I often wondered if they were ever new. It is remarkable that they seldom break. As we climbed the last ridge we met a barebacked rider, a tall, sun-browned shep-

herd carrying a lost lamb in his bosom with its head protruding above the rider's arm and the well known words of Elizabeth Clephane's hymn came to our lips,—

> "But all thro' the mountains thunder riven
> And up from the rocky steep,
> There rose a cry to the gate of heaven,
> 'Rejoice! I have found my sheep.'"

It was five in the evening when we mounted the last ridge and looked down upon *Hruni*. It was one of the fairest sights I have ever witnessed,—the basin-shaped valley of verdure surrounded by lofty ridges, the thousand sheep scattered upon the hillsides and through the meadow, the group of houses which constitute the farm buildings, and the little church across the yard, the steam rising from some hot springs near the dwellings, the hundreds of haycocks waiting for the morrow to be taken to the stacks, the songs of the maidens driving the cows home from the pasture,—a picture of prosperity and of peace. Surely this is not Iceland or else the name is a misnomer.

It cost us an hour to pick our way across the hassocky bog, luxuriant with rushes, sedges, and cotton-grass. No frog croaks in the Iceland marshes and no reptile ever glides through the sheltering grass, they are unknown. It seemed as if we might reach the house in ten minutes but it took an hour. We learned that to approach an Icelandic farmhouse it is usually necessary to ride around it in a wide detour. Bogs, streams, fences or hot areas seem ever to lie between the house and the place where the traveller first sees it. During our circuit we saw a flaxen haired, barefooted lad seated upon a hummock with a book and a bundle of plants by his side. A dog was with him and two others watched the sheep from distant points, reclining with noses between

their feet with eyes alert for any change in the direction of the feeding sheep. If a group of them started towards the mowing land the dog spoke once or twice and if the sheep did not turn he trotted nearer and spoke again in a more determined tone. The sheep obeyed and the dog returned to his vantage point. I dismounted when the boy saluted us and shook hands with him and returned the Icelandic salutation. I examined the handful of flowers and noticed that some of them were partially dissected. Reaching for the worn and faded book I discovered that it was a Manual of the Icelandic Flora and that it was written entirely in Latin. A lad of twelve or thirteen years of age; his task, the keeping of a thousand sheep with no fences beyond the immediate farm enclosure; his recreation, the study of botany through the medium of Latin. Of such boys are the Icelandic scholars made, not through the medium of costly buildings, fine equipment, luxurious homes, indulgent parents, theaters, parties and secret societies, but through the wiser agencies of paternal love that sternly upholds usefulness, interest in study for the love of knowledge. Though barefoot and clad in vaðmal, the Icelandic lad will obtain an education that surpasses the products of the endowed institutions of other lands.

At six in the afternoon we were welcomed in the guest room of the pastor's home. Kjartan Helgason farmer and minister, labors six days upon his large farm and on the seventh preaches in two different churches, riding several miles to meet his distant parishoners. He came soon after our arrival and welcomed us with a cordial, honest welcome. That Icelandic welcome! It comes from the heart and the handshake conveys more than words can express. Hospitality was a sacred word in ancient Scandinavia and though but a filmy covering for hypocrisy in many more favored lands, in Iceland

the essence is maintained. Welcome! How often we say it and hear it and do not know the meaning. We welcome some long absent loved one. Is it the same when we welcome a neighbor or a frequent visitor? What about the welcome accorded to a total stranger who brings us nothing but extra work, who calls us from our necessary task, who eats our choicest viands, who uses our guest chamber, consumes our time with questions that pry into our very secrets? Would you know the meaning of this ancient word you must see it exemplified as a dependent stranger in a strange land. *Vel-kominn,* well-come, it is good that you have come. Unless this meaning rings in the sound and bristles in our every act it is better that we drop from our vocabulary this word which we have borrowed from an ancient race. Not alone at *Hruni* did we hear and feel *Vel-kominn* but in every household from the humblest peasant on the borders of the desert to the homes of the highest in the land, even the professors at the University, the venerable poet of the north and the Prime Minister in his mansion.

The Icelandic Sunday ends at six in the afternoon. When we came from the house after supper we were astonished to see the farm maids going to the fields with their ropes and rakes, the mowers sharpening their scythes and the general bustle of a work day. Inquiry of the pastor revealed to us the custom. The method of sharpening the scythe is unique. The Icelandic boy does not have to turn the stone while a strong man leans his weight upon the scythe and slides it back and forth across the revolving stone. As a boy I always regarded the turning of the stone as a man's job and I still think so. Many disagreeable tasks on the farm are given to the boy just because he is a boy. In Iceland the blade is placed on a flat piece of steel and the edge slips under a presser-foot like that on a sewing machine.

A rod of steel with a square end and a half inch in diameter is placed perpendicularly upon the blade between the claws of the presser-foot and is struck a smart blow with a hammer. The blade is slowly advanced under the repeated blows. The blade is thus hammered into an edge rather than ground. I noticed the custom throughout the country. At *Hruni* there was a machine worked with a treadle and cam that did the pounding while the operator slowly advanced the blade. Two days later I met a gentleman from Worcester, Massachusetts, to whom I mentioned this method. He had not seen it and was doubtful of the accuracy of my observations. While we were discussing it there came from the back of the buildings the sharp clink-clink-clink of the steel and he was soon convinced by observation that I was not joking. The whetstone is used in the same way as with the American farmer. It was interesting to note that all the scythestones in the country were made in New Hampshire, U. S. A. These stones are shipped to Denmark, resold by the Danish merchant and shipped to Iceland; the Icelandic trader sells them to the farmer. The farmer then pays a price that is just half of what the New England farmer pays for the same stone. It is evident that the scythestone industry does not need any tariff protection.

In front of the house an excellent patch of potatoes was in full bloom unravished by the Colorado beetle. A flowering rose bush climbed the house-wall by the door, which was flanked by several species of the old-fashioned flowers that bloom so persistently around the dilapidated dwellings of New England's abandoned farms. A herd of cows were yielding their milk within a turf enclosure at one end of the house and the newly painted church across the lane added to the peacefulness and thriftiness of the scene.

The hot spring on the farm furnishes the heat for

the cooking and the hot clay is used for baking. Rye bread is baked by digging a hole in the clay and inserting a stone jar. This bread reminded us strongly of the fine products of the old brick ovens of our grandmothers. In the evening pastor Helgason, invited us into his study and in a mixture of Icelandic, English and Latin we conversed till midnight. This library contains many volumes of choice literature, theological works, and history. He also showed us a large herbarium in which the plants were mounted accordingly to Linnaeus and named. We then learned more about the favorite occupation of the lad who tends the sheep and studies botany at the same time. Through the labor of father and son several new species of plants have been added to the flora of the country, some of them unknown elsewhere. It was my pleasure on my return to send to these botanists a copy of the last edition of *Gray's Manual* and I count among my choicest letters from Iceland a reply from Kjartan Helgason to which was attached a rare and beautiful gentian, *Gentiana campestris, L. var. Islandica.*

The bedrooms to which we were assigned were models of neatness and comfort. The eiderdown coverlets, everpresent, were encased in dainty slips and the sheets were artistically embroidered. Embroidery is a pastime on the farms and the industry of girls as well as the women has produced many beautiful pieces that would be given places of honor in the American guest room. Spinning, weaving, knitting are thriving arts in Icelandic homes. The mill and dry goods stores have not driven these delightful occupations from the homes. Delightful? Yes. When labor is performed because of the joy it affords the laborer, then the product is not only useful but it becomes a work of art. William Morris said, "Art is the expression of a man's joy in his work." These Icelandic works of art are made

for the use of generations. They are not items of common occurrence in the dry goods store, purchased to-day, worn out to-morrow or thrown aside because your neighbor has found a different pattern. Being individual work, no two are alike. Each works into the fabric her own design and with the stitches go thought, care, accuracy and the result is *art*. No better attraction could be placed in the show window of our linen merchants than some of these tastefully embroidered pillowslips, table covers or other fancy work.

The quality of the hospitality in these Icelandic homes is such as to make the stranger feel as if he were at home and it is all done so quietly and without any display. It is simply natural. Every where there is perfect safety, on the long trail, in the village or on the lonely farm. All one has he may leave exposed in the sheds for days without fear of its being disturbed. Honesty is bred in the race. It is refreshing to have no use for locks and to know that one can not lose anything unless he deliberately casts it into a rift. Whatever one leaves behind him will be forwarded and as Ólafur once said,—

"It is a matter of great pride if an Icelander finds anything to be able to return it to the owner and he will make every effort to do this."

The people deal honestly with each other and with the stranger. In former days it was customary to entertain the traveller over night and accept no payment. It is not so now and it is better as it is. Supplies must be carried many days over mountains, across the rivers and always on the backs of the ponies so that they are expensive. The Icelanders are not rich, though many of them are quite comfortably situated, as is the farmer at *Hrúni*. Still, it is not right to take of their substance simply because they feel it in their hearts to give it. In spite of the payment for the lodging and the food,

the traveller will always depart knowing that he has received kindness, comfort and thoughtfulness for which he can not pay.

The people are quiet in demeanor, often reserved before strangers, but they are not morose and despondent as some writers have stated. They thoroughly enjoy a good time, laugh and joke with the wittiest of people, are fond of singing and have excellent voices. The tone of the voice is soft, refined and pleasant to the ear. There are no dialects. They speak as did their ancestors of twelve centuries ago and the accounts of these people in their ancient Sagas in the main are true to day. Bad manners in children I have never seen: in politeness they are models of a high order. They are the children we have read about, those "that are seen and not heard." It is worth a cake of chocolate at any time just to see the face of the child light up and have him shyly present his hand to the giver in genuine gratitude. They are affectionate, obedient and watchful for the welfare of the parents in their childish way. Often have I seen a girl of ten or twelve wait upon the table, while the remainder of the family were eating, quietly attending to all the duties at the right time without a word of direction and doing it as well as a maid trained in the service.

Outside of *Reykjavik,* throughout the country the women do not sit down to eat with the men unless a woman is the guest. In all the homes where we stayed, we never had the hostess sit at the table with us but once, but the men often ate with us. This is an ancient custom of the race. When the meal is over the guest rises and shakes hands with the host or hostess and says "thanks for the meal" and the response is, "may it do you good."

CHAPTER X

HEKLA

"Irregularly huge, august, and high,
Mass piled on mass, and rock on ponderous rock,
In Alpine majesty,—its lofty brows
Sometimes dark frowning, and anon serene,
Wrapt now in clouds invisible and now
Glowing with golden sunshine."

—*Anon.*

EACH day in Iceland brings new scenes. Each morning we found ourselves asking,—"What will be the excitement to day?" The surprises of the landscape are innumerable. Though we were somewhat accustomed to the wild and strange scenery, each ascent of a ridge, each turning of a mountain angle presented surprising views. This is one ot the charms of travel on horseback through a roadless country. The variety of scenes that unfold before the eye is as rich as the changes in New England weather. Day after day in the saddle does not produce monotony, the unexpected lures the traveller onward and when supper is over and he sits down upon some commanding hillside of the farm to record the events of the day he is prompted to write,—"This has been the best day of all."

We turned southward from *Hruni,* forded the *Laxá* and climbed the sheep-pastured ridges that make a gridiron of the territory between the *Laxá* and the *Thjórsá,* Bull-River. The farms are widely scattered but they have every appearance of rural prosperity. The grazing lands are extensive, the grass abundant and such masses of flowers in bloom as we trampled during these ten miles I have never seen beyond the

influence of cultivation. These pastures are rich in nutritious grass and thousands of sheep and many ponies and cows are grazing on the hillsides. From these slopes we look down upon the busy haying scenes in the *tún,* strings of ponies laden with hay, a bundle on each side, guided by a child from field to haystack, maidens with rakes turning the fragrant grass, men and women swinging scythes to a merry tune which all are singing,—these are the elements of the Arcadian picture.

At noon as we were working our way over a rough and deeply rutted plot of meadow by the river, the pack horses, in disputing the right of priority to one of the ditches, rubbed their packing cases together so vigorously that the metal hangers of one of the saddles broke and it required an hour of time and all the string and straps we could muster to enable us to proceed. That night the farmer, in a little forge as primitive as that of Tubal Cain, wrought new hangers. Nearly every farmer has one of these little forges for repairing his instruments. When the shop is not in use as a blacksmith's shop it is often used for smoking meat and fish.

Soon after the accident we reached *Thjórsáholt,* Bull-Ridge. Here we had our dinner upon the grass between the house and the river, the weather being delightful. The *Thjórsá* is broad and rapid and its waters are icy cold. The farmer has a small boat and is required by the government to act as ferryman. At the bank of the river, packing cases, saddles and bridles were all piled in a heap into the shaky and leaking boat. We drove the ponies into the water to swim to the other side. The two pack horses fully understood what was expected of them and struck boldly into the current. Some of the saddle ponies, after being swept down stream a short distance, being chilled in the water, returned

to the shore. We drove them in again and this time they persevered. How I pitied them in the cold water! The river is nearly a half mile wide, the current runs so rapidly that it breaks into white water and it sweeps the ponies down stream so rapidly that it seems impossible for their strength to endure till they can reach the opposite shore. In the midstream the water swept over their backs so that only their noses and ears were above the water. When the last ones were half way over we followed in the boat, five of us in number, and were swept rather than rowed in a diagonal line down stream. When the ponies reached the opposite bank they rolled in the sand, shook themselves dry and cut capers as if they were yet colts wild and free in their mountain pastures with no experience of curb and strap. Each day revealed some new accomplishment of these hardy beasts and this day my admiration surpassed all previous experiences.

We were nearing *Hekla,* Hooded, so named from the hood of cloud that nearly always caps the summit. Evidences of its ten centuries and more of destruction were all around us in deserts of ash and sand, ruined farms, once the finest in the land, fragments and masses of lava that had been hurled fifteen and twenty miles in the many violent explosions from the craters of the volcano and the changed water courses that had been blocked by the flowing lava or choked by the drifting sand. In single file the ponies waded through the fine red, yellow and black sand and the dust kicked up by the troup literally obscured the leaders. The wind sifted the fine, gritty material through every needle-hole in our clothing; it filled our hair, blinded the eyes and produced minature mud-cakes in the mouth. An hour of this work satisfied us and we rejoiced as we edged into a partly turfed section of the plain. Here the sheep in scattered groups of three to fifteen marked

the outskirts of the grazing land and turning towards them we soon entered a long, narrow strip of excellent grass land between two masses of the recent lava flow. On approaching a farm we noted how the farmer had constructed a series of wind-breaks of stone to keep the sifting sand from encroaching too vigorously upon the mowing land. There is very little good turf in this section for fence building and the barbed wire has been substituted. How out of place it is in Iceland! It is ugly enough when hidden in the brush of a back pasture in New England but when it stands out bare and threatening above the green turf of an Icelandic meadow and supplants the grass-grown walls of ancient days, which add so much to the charm of the landscape, it is incongruous. There are several farms in the neighborhood of *Hekla* which are mere fragments of their former size and to traverse the sand and lava debris of this section is to realize a little of the terrible havoc the volcano has spread around its base.

At four in the afternoon we reached *Galtalaekur*, Boar-Brook, a poor little farm, just a remnant of grass between the black lava and the ash heaps where once a myriad acres of the choicest grazing lands in Iceland supported a large population. The buildings are very old and are strictly of the ancient type, consisting of a series of six stone and turfed walled huts built side by side. Each hut has a gable in front, no two of the same height, but the roof is rounded down to the ground at the back. The eaves of the adjacent roofs coalesce and in the gutters the flowers attain an abnormal development. There is no regularity as to the size of the different sections of the house. Each portion appears to have been added in times of increasing prosperity as needed and built in proportions according to the increment of need. They have been so long constructed that age, even in an Icelandic house, is

showing itself and as the building grew from one end, so now, from this same end is it crumbling. The family are retreating from house to house and unless better times come to this farm in the way of grass for cattle and sheep, a few generations more will drive the family to the last enclosure and then,—abandonment.

Let us enter the house. To do so we must stoop beneath the lintel and step down into the passage which has walls of turf, yellow and centuries dry, and an earth floor packed and worn by the trampling of unnumbered generations. There is no light in the passage save what comes through the open door and as we turn to our right, at right angles, blackness faces us. Groping a little further a gleam of light locates a door at the right which we open to enter the guest room. Here there is also evidence of age. The room is well finished with Norway spruce and innocent of paint. Age has given to the wood a dark rich brown which no paint can imitate or equal in richness of color. A triple window lets in a flood of light for there are no such unsanitary things as blinds and curtains. The windows are after the Danish plan, split through the middle, hinged at the sides and open outwards like American blinds. This is an excellent innovation of recent years and is often the only method of ventilation. Wood houses admit an abundance of air through unnumbered cracks and chinks in the joining, especially if built for speculation, but walls of turf two to three feet thick are proof against the slightest drafts. Miss Oswald in 1880 described the windows as being set solidly into the walls with no way to open. She felt the oppression of the foul air so much that she often broke out a light of glass and paid for "the accident" in the morning with an added apology. The influence of the medical officers in their fight to decrease tuberculosis has produced the desired change in window construction. I

never found a guest room where the windows did not open as above described. The furniture of this room consisted of a bed three feet wide and the customary scantiness of length, a table and several chairs, numerous boxes in which clothing and valuables are stored, photographs in albums and in wire racks on the walls, and an organ made in Brattleboro, Vermont. We found these organs in every home save one during our two summers of travelling among the farms, no matter how humble the home.

The music most in evidence is sacred with numerous selections from the German and Italian masters and much of the minor lyrical music of the Icelandic school. The people are fond of music and most of them are fine singers, a few of them excellent. We will never forget the quartett and the congregational singing in the Cathedral at *Reykjavik* which we heard a year later. There are numerous composers, the best known being Sveinbjórn Sveinbjónsson, well known in the musical circles of Europe, who now resides in Edinburgh, Scotland. A large amount of the music has been composed for the love-songs, idyls and pastoral hymns written by the local poets. The themes of the song writers are mostly pastoral, or, they are an appreciation of the charming scenery which inspired such writers as Jonas Hallgrimson and Matthias Jochumsson. The subtlety of the Icelandic language does not permit of accurate translation of the fine meaning into English. To illustrate one of these appreciations combined with ardent love of country, I have rendered into English, without any attempt at alliteration, one stanza from Jonas Hallgrimson,—

> You know the land with smiling face
> Which many blue-ridged mountains grace,
> The song of swan on quiet stream
> Where meads with joyous flowers teem,

The glacier's broad and shining wall,
The glint of sea, the roar of fall,—
God's blessing rest on thee, I pray,
Throughout the everlasting day.

There are songs of the meadow and the sheep-tending, of fishing and of the hay-harvest, of returning spring and dying summer, of the happiness of home-life, of sorrow and joy and love and the whole scale of human emotions. In the midst of their poverty and toil they are a cheerful and happy race, singing at their occupations or writing songs in the saddle or at the sheep-tending. The children are taught to appreciate poetry and to write it and the result is that nearly every one makes verses and out of the many attempts there is much that is excellent. Much of the poetry is spontaneous as in the *Saga* days. The *Sagas* are replete with impromptu verses witty, ironical, boastful and descriptive. Thus *Kari,* when *Skapti* accuses him of "sneaking out of this atonement" after the famous trial of 1112 at the *Althing* for the burning of *Njal,* retorts, in part,—

"Men who skim the main on sea stag
Well in this ye showed your sense,
Making game about the Burning,
Mocking Helgi, Grim and Njal;
Now the moor round rocky Swinestye,*
As men run and shake their shields,
With another grunt shall rattle
When this *Thing* is past and gone."

The great Icelandic poets have translated into the Icelandic many of Shakespeare's plays, the Iliad, *Odyssey,* Paradise Lost and scores of the minor pieces of English and American poetry as well as the master-

*Swinestye is ironical for *Swinefell,* Swine Hill, the home of *Flosi,* the man who did the burning.

pieces of German, French and Scandinavian literature. When we learn that the rules for Icelandic poetry are strict, that not only rhyme and rhythm but a complicated alliteration must be incorporated in the verses, we can understand what a task these translators have had. There are many variations of the alliteration. In the following is noted not only simple alliteration but also that the *second hemistich begins with the penultimate syllable of the first.* To illustrate note the following:—

*H*rein-tiörnum g l e d r *horna*
Horn nair litt at thorna
Miöðr hegnir *b*ol *bargna*
*Brag*ningr scipa Fagnir.
Folk hömlo gefr *fram*la
*Fram*lyndr vidum gamla
Sas helldr fyrir *s*kot *Skiölld*um.
*Skiölld*ungr h u n a n g s ölldur.

"The king refreshes his warriors with the pure mead, — mead which soothes the sorrows of man. The horns are seldom empty. The aged and magnanimous monarch, who wields off the darts with his shield, divides the honey-drink among his warriors."

Henderson.

The organ in this humble home suggested this digression. Supper over, let us return to the farm. Down by the stream there is a diminutive grist mill with hand-hewn stones fifteen inches in diameter and turned by a most primitive water wheel. The mill never stops. The rye or barley, imported from Europe, is placed in the hopper and ground whole. There is no differentiation of the botanical parts as in America, where the live stock get the nutritious portions and bread is made out of the remainder because it is "white." When the meal bucket at the house is empty the maid goes down to the brook, removes the flour, refills the hopper and thus in rotation for years, or until the mill must

be repaired. To appreciate this mill in all its simplicity one must see it. The stones are placed on the upper end of a vertical shaft. At the lower end of the shaft there are simply two paddle blades attached to turn the shaft under the pressure of the water. Simple, but effective, always at work and producing nutritious flour as long as the grains are added to the miniature hopper.

After an inspection of the mill, the same as found on many farms, I visited the mowers. They were at work with vigor, swinging the scythe with a powerful stroke. This a mower does for about an hour when he suddenly drops it in the swath, goes to the house for a bowl of *Skyr,* curds, a cup of coffee or lounges on the ground to smoke or take snuff with a compaion in a similar degree of exhaustion. After an hour of rest he returns to his scythe and thus from early morning till midnight does he labor during the haying season. There are always some men and a few women mowing but one can usually find two or three scythes deserted by their users in the swath. I had an introduction to the crooked, hand-blistering, ache-producing instrument of America in my tender years which ripened into an acquaintance of great familiarity, which, true to the proverb, bred contempt. I examined this Icelandic turf-parer not without misgivings as to what I could do with so strange an implement. The scythe is twenty inches long, straight and two and a half inches wide. The blade is extremely thin and buckles and bends in contact with the turf. The snath is the peculiar feature. It is made like a rake handle and is six feet long, perfectly straight and attached to the scythe at right angles. The nebs are unlike; that for the right hand is like ours and similarily placed, that for the left is a straight strip about eighteen inches long and is placed on the snath at right angles and just below the shoulder, reaching down to the palm of the left hand. At

the end of this strip is a cross piece to fit the palm much like the end of a canoe paddle. The end of the long snath protrudes over the left shoulder.

The men quit their work and watched me with a quizzical expression as I picked up one of these abandoned implements and swung it in the air once or twice before venturing to set it into the grass, after the fashion of a golfer before the drive. When the faces of the mowers had broken into a smile, I knew that I must try it and into the grass it went with the long steady swing of the old habit. After a few strokes I was cutting a wide clean swath and paring to the turf so that the soil showed in the approved Icelandic style. A middle aged man, who had been whetting his scythe, struck in behind me close to my heels while the others stood to watch the race. May I modestly state that my New Hampshire training had not been in vain? I had counted upon the Icelandic custom of slashing vigorously for a distance of about two rods and then stopping to use the whetstone. If I could hold out that distance I knew that my honor would be safe. I did. In his anxiety to mow me out he ran the whole length of the blade into the tough turf and in pulling it out lost several strokes, whereupon he decided to use the stone and I dropped the scythe in the swath and stepped aside. The onlookers burst into a roar of chaffing at their companion and rushed to shake my hand and pat me on the back. On smooth ground I afterwards found that I could hold my own with them but on the rough and hummocky land, which constitutes by far the larger portion of the mowing, I could not cut over as much ground as they. Seeing the thousands of adjacent hummocks the size of a wash tub, covering acres of the best mowing land and caused by the heaving of the turf under the influence of the frost, I understood the reason for the shape of the Icelandic scythe snath. In this

kind of mowing the Icelander does not try to cut a straight swath. He mounts a hummock, slashes the grass and a part of the turf from the hummocks around him, mounts the decapitated hummocks and deftly shaves the sides and pares the hollows. There are no stones in the mowing lands; scarcity of hay, the necessity for getting all the short grass during the thousand years of mowing has removed every trace of lava fragments. Whenever we arrived at a farm I worked an hour or more with the haymakers in order to get acquainted with the people and study their methods of work. After a half day in one field the farmer told Johannes that I ought to stay in their country, as I would make a good Icelander. This was after I had had considerable experience with the scythe, the fine-toothed rake and the *reipe,* rope, for binding hay for transportation.

Evidently no one had occupied the guest room at *Galtalaekur* for some time. When Icelanders arrive at a farm to stay over night they, according to ancient custom, go to the *baðstofa,* sitting and sleeping room, where all the people sleep. In early days *baðstofa* signified "bathroom," but it has lost that meaning. Mrs. Russell had retired early in anticipation of a hard day on *Hekla.* When I came in from the hayfield she was sitting up in bed and laughing. On being asked the cause of the merriment, she replied,—

"As soon as I had retired, three women came into the room on tip toe, whispering and pointing to me. I feigned to be asleep and after some hesitation two of them approached the bed and gazed at me a long time. Then one of them quietly drew from between the coverlets several skirts and other articles of wearing apparel. They went out and I heard them giggling in the passage way. In a short time they came in again and this time pulled out from under the bed enough dishes to

set a table, and several packages. Then they, thinking I was sound asleep, lifted up the eider-down at the foot of the bed and drew out a big platter laden with what I suppose was smoked fish."

I had no sooner reached the room and was wondering where I was to sleep, than these ladies came again bringing more eider-down covers and a box. The box was placed at the end of a chest, a bed was made upon the combination and I turned in to await an early call. But those two boxes were possessed to separate and I found myself on the floor between them in a smother of covers. I then made up my bed on the floor and in the morning rearranged the boxes to give them the appearance of having been used as intended. This I did on the following night. The people did the best they could to be hospitable, served us excellent food and attended to every thing possible for our comfort, even to removing our clothes and boots during the night and cleaning them. True hospitality is in the spirit of the service and not in the quantity or quality and this fact must be recognized in order to do justice to these friendly people.

Hekla was our goal. Across the noisy river, out of the folds of its mantle of wrinkled lava ridges, rose the icy shoulders and hooded head which we hoped to win this day. We engaged an additional guide at the farm to go with Johannes and taking our best ponies, Michael Sunlocks and Greba, we left the farm at six in the morning. This is early in Iceland. From ten to one is the usual hour for beginning the ride of the day. A short trot across the field brought us to the *Vestr-Rángá,* West-Wrong-River. There is an Eastern as well as a Western "Wrong-River," so named because the eruptions of *Hekla* have so often changed its course. We passed close to the *tún* of *Noefrhólt,* Clever-Stony-Ridge. The stony ridge is there but why

"clever" I can not surmise, unless the people have been clever in dodging the big masses of rock that roll down from the mountain. The buildings are close in under the steep lava wall and there are hundreds of great stones around the buildings, any one of which would have destroyed them, that have tumbled down from the mountain wall. Many homes have been demolished in this country and people killed by the rolling stones. This ridge is palagonitic conglomerate, the refuse of preglacial eruptions. The term preglacial in Iceland means the same as in other glaciated countries, but the geological time is much more recent than in North America. More of this when we reach the glaciers. We climbed the ridge beside a beautiful stream of water sluicing down a grooved ledge and saw two pairs of Harlequin ducks, *Histrionicus minutus,* swimming in the swift water. It is remarkable how these swimmers can hold their position in such strong currents. The bluish-gray plumage of the males slashed with bars of white and the dark brown dress of the females made a pretty picture as the lively birds zigzagged in the glistening stream. They were quite fearless and did not dive until we were within ten feet of them.

Coming to a great quadrangular enclosure in the lava walls we stopped to rest and to feed the ponies, as this is the last spot where grass can be obtained. The great ridge to the right which is deep red and compact like jasper is the lava of the recent eruption. It terminates in a fissure in the mountain side far below the summit. The wall to the left turned in front of us in a long sweep to join the base of the above mentioned rift. From our position no egress appeared from this formidable *cul de sac* and we expected that the guides would leave the ponies here with the ascent just begun and that we would have this tangled mass of lava ropes to scale as best we could. A mile further on a twist

in the flow, where the viscid lava rose in a billow and broke back upon itself, we found a precarious egress which the ponies negotiated with the agility and sure-footedness of mountain sheep. We dodged about between the basalt fragments and over the ash ridges rising higher and higher with every turn. The travelling is somewhat dangerous in places, as I had occasion to testify, the lava is full of cracks and holes and the lichens have woven a treacherous carpet over this floor. High above loom the red walls and the obsidian points bristling like a *cheval-de-frise*. We had not yet reached the snow line but the fog hung low upon the shoulders of the mountain and we despaired of even a momentary lifting of the mantle should we gain the summit. We next came to an ash ridge so steep that we dismounted and sometimes walking and sometimes riding we gained the top of this ridge, an elevation of 2,000 feet above the sea. Descending into a wild glen of chaotic fragments, like huge masses of broken glass, we found a patch of level sand and here we left the ponies. We tied them in pairs, the head of one to the tail of the other and here we left the poor beasts without food or water till six at night to shiver in the blast.

Hekla is situated thirty miles from the sea on the south shore of the island. In clear weather it is easily seen from the Westman Islands and is a fine spectacle as it lifts its silvery mass above the great plain. It has two peaks, craters. From these peaks extend northeast and southwest a ridge of lava fifteen miles each. This is the material that has belched from these craters and more recently from the rifts deep down in the side of the mountain. We made the ascent from the west. From the eminence which we had gained we looked over the country traversed during the past three days. The base and the middle slopes are composed of contorted and tangled skeins of lava which flowed at different periods.

the more recent ones adapting themselves to the older ridges, sometimes filling the gullies and overflowing, sometimes melting down thin barriers or baking the ridges of ash and rubble into conglomerate, which someone has aptly termed a "geological Irish stew." The rolling, spreading and twisting of these semi-fluid hot streams, the terrible rough and punctured surface of the lava, the sharp and glass-like angles, the pinnacles and crevasses are better imagined than described. No adequate idea can be obtained till one has made the ascent, till one has had many a fall, cut his hands upon the glass, scoured his boots on the needlepoints, lost his breath and almost lost his temper,—till then he will remain in ignorance of the true condition of *Hekla's* horrent surface. Now and again a patch of loose sand or a pocket of snow gives respite from the sharp and angular blocks that menace a cut with every step.

The ridge where we left the ponies commands a grand view well worth the ascent to this point, even though the traveller goes no further. Most people who "make the ascent of *Hekla*" go no further than the summit of this ridge, though it is only two-fifths of the elevation of the mountain. We ate a portion of our lunch, cached the remainder in a crevice under a rock, and picked our way as best we could over a tumbled pile of bristling lava for half an hour when we arrived at the snow which was in exceptionally good condition for walking. It lay in a narrow gulch between two steep ridges of rock which extend up to the steepest portion of the mountains. While we are making this easy portion of the climb let us recount a bit of *Hekla's* history.

Hekla is the greatest volcano in Iceland and in some respects the greatest in the world. What makes a volcano great? Is it the area of the base and its altitude? Is it the number of recorded eruptions? Is

it the number of people it has destroyed together with their flocks and herds? Is it the space of territory devastated and the duration of any one or any series of its eruptions? This volcano was doubtless active prior to the settlement of the country as shown by the formation of its slopes, but since 1004 there have been twenty-five recorded eruptions, each of a serious nature to the country and destructive of life and property. Some of these eruptions have lasted only a few days and several for months and the one beginning in 1766 lasted two years. The great eruption was in 1845 and lasted seven months. The shortest period between eruptions was from 1294 to 1300, only six years, and previous to this eruption the volcano had been quiet for seventy-two years. The longest period was between the last two eruptions, 1768 to 1845, seventy-seven years and this followed the long eruption of two years. The average period of inactivity from 1004 to 1845 is thirty-two years. These figures do not take into account the frequent flowing of lava from the rifts during the periods of so-called inactivity. The following are the most memorable eruptions,—

*1294 Eighth recorded eruption. There were violent and destructive earthquakes throughout the country. Great rifts in the old lava plains were opened. The rivers were covered with pumice and many of them changed their courses. New hot springs came into existence and others disappeared. There was great destruction of life and property.

1300 Ninth recorded eruption and following the short period of six years of rest. This was one of the most violent on record. Ashes covered hundreds of miles of the north country. There were many severe

*With the exception of the last records, 1854, and 1913 this data is compiled from the letters of *Von Troll*, Upsala, Sweden, 1777.

earthquakes and the destruction of the grass and livestock produced a famine with resulting heavy loss of life.

1436 Thirteenth recorded eruption. Many homesteads and much arable land laid waste under a mantle of scorching ashes.

1510 Fifteenth recorded eruption. Enormous volumes of ash and pumice were poured out and myriads of lava bombs were scattered for miles, which in falling demolished houses and killed livestock and people.

1583 Sixteenth recorded eruption. This was excessive in its violence. Thundering explosions were audible throughout the island and continued for twelve days with great violence. Eighteen columns of flaming gases issued from as many different vents in the mountain. Earthquakes destroyed many farms and hundreds of the turf and stone dwellings were demolished. There was a great loss of life.

1845 Twenty-fourth recorded eruption. It began on September second and continued without cessation for seven months. The ashes rose miles in the air and were carried by the wind to the Shetland Islands and to Norway. During this eruption, it is estimated that 500 feet in altitude of the top of the mountain was blown into fragments and hurled in places to a distance of fifteen miles or more. Hot sand, ashes and scoriae were ejected in a constant fountain from the crater and the mountain itself opened lower down, and from this rift came the floods of lava that flowed for seven months destroying everything in its path. It has been estimated by the Danish survey that the mass of melted rock poured out, (not counting sand, ash and scoriae), from this rent is 14,500,000 cubic feet.

1913 Twenty-fifth recorded eruption. At three in the morning of the twenty-fifth of April, Friday, there was a violent earthquake shock in the region of *Hekla*

and several houses fell, notably the ancient one at *Galtalaekur,* to which special reference has been made in this chapter. Heavy smoke poured from two sources and fine ashes fell between the *Thjórsá* and the *Hvitá.* On the thirtieth of April the lava spouted over 1000 feet into the air and on the first of May a rift opened that was over 600 feet in length. Moderate action continued until the eighth of May. During the eighth and the ninth of May the action was violent and the outflowing lava covered an area two miles in length by one in width.

Krakatindr is a small peak on the eastern slope of the *Hekla* field and *Lambafell,* Lamb Mountain, is another in the same locality. Here the eruption was central and in the last mentioned ridge the lava broke out in ten distinct places. It must be remembered that the 1913 eruption of *Hekla* did not come from either of the summit craters, but from the foot hills and buttresses of this mountain. It must be regarded as an eruption of *Hekla* when dealt with scientifically. The mass of lava, slag and ashes on the summit of *Hekla* will preclude any future activity within the ancient craters; but, future action, like this of 1913, will take place in rifts in the sides and at the foot of this volcano, since it is in this lower crust that the mountain is weakest.

It was over the ruins of the 1845 eruption that we had travelled for a day and it was those curled and solidified streams of bristling and horrent lava over which we have been making our snail-like pace to the summit. When we speak of a great volcano we unconsciously turn to Vesuvius but this is because of its dramatic position in history and because it has enjoyed more advertising than all other volcanoes in the world. Because of the vineyards and the dense population upon its slopes and the number of lives it has destroyed we

thoughtlessly crown it the king of volcanoes. Had the plains of *Hekla* enjoyed the mild climate of Naples they would have supported many times the population within the radius of the influence of Vesuvius and the destruction of life due to *Hekla's* eruption would have totaled an appalling figure. Vesuvius was silent for long centuries prior to 79 A. D. then came its ash and mud eruption, then for about fifteen centuries it was silent. Since that time its activity has been largely spectacular. Lava rifts where molten rock pours out continuously are beyond doubt the most terrible forms of volcanic activity,—such has been the type of *Hekla*. To answer the questions which introduced this topic,—the things that make a volcano great are not the circumstances of men. Its greatness lies in the number, violence, duration and character of the eruptions, in the quantity of molten material forced out, in the mass of detrius ejected from the crater and the power with which that material is vomited upon the earth. If this definition of greatness is correct, then *Hekla* is the greatest volcano of recorded time. It has been little studied, never systematically, on account of its remoteness.

At the upper end of the snow covered lava gulch we turned to the right and the real snow climbing commenced. At this place the mountain has a slope of forty-five degrees. The snow was hard, too hard in fact for sure footing, almost ice, and we were forced to dig steps with our feet to support us while making the next step. At the time we were on the mountain there was an unusual amount of snow, which filled the cracks and smoothed the angular projections of this upper portion. On the steepest slopes the snow basely rewarded our confidence and gave us many a backward and ignominous slide.

While we were fastening the ponies, the feasibility

of Mrs. Russell's going further was questioned by Johannes.

"Madam will stay with me till the guide and your man return?"

"I am going to try the climb with Mr. Russell," she replied.

"The lady go to the top of *Hekla!* If the lady go then Johannes will go, but I fear the lady will not go far."

When we were struggling up the steep snow slope, I made steps in advance and Mrs. Russell, importuned by Johannes and weary with the toil was ready to halt, if she had received the least encouragement from me.

"The lady can go no further," said Johannes to me as he dug a hole in the snow for a seat, "and you must not allow it."

I replied, "she has travelled two days over a rough country, fording the rivers and now she has almost won the cinder cone. She will always be sorry in America to have to say that she got *nearly* to the top and gave up the struggle." This I said, talking to Johannes but for the benefit of "the lady."

"Well, Johannes can go no further; Johannes is an old man and he has pain in here," placing his hand over his stomach, "the *skyr* I ate this morning was little and it not good to do *Hekla*-climb on." So saying, he dug his hole deeper and reclined in the snow while we pushed our way over the remaining snow surface to the cinder cone.

Yes, Johannes was an old man and a faithful one. His action this day was a fine bit of Icelandic courtesy and faithful service. Honestly he did not think it wise for a woman to attempt the climb and being confident that Mrs. Russell would not endure, he knew that my climb of the mountain would be defeated if I had had to turn back with her, so he trudged along

manfully to be her companion when she ceased climbing and await my return. When we were near enough to the summit so that it was evident that "the lady" would win, he halted and veiled his whole earnest efforts under the excuse of his weakness. He was a faithful man, constantly anticipating our wants and always ready to exert himself for our comfort and pleasure.

When we were on the glassy lava we wished we were on the snow slope, when we were scaling and slipping on the snow we wished we were on the lava. But what of the cinder cone! That was short but it was the worst of all. We made the ascent on a narrow ridge like that of a roof. The loose material rolled away and often took us backward with it. A false step to either side of the ridge carried us down several yards and it became a hand and foot scramble to regain the lost position on the ridge. Near the very top if we had made a false step towards the right we would have been precipitated several rods into the creeping rubble of multi-colored cinders, if the false step had been to the left we would have fallen an equal distance on to the snowbank in the rim of the crater.

During the last hour of the climb we were enveloped in clouds and as we gained the summit snow was falling. A sudden change in the direction of the wind swept the clouds from the top of the mountain and we had ten minutes of clear sky which afforded time for two good photographs and a quick view of the surrounding country. Mrs. Russell unfurled the flag of the Arctic Club of America, the stars and stripes in the upper left hand corner of an ice-green field. This flag had been presented to me for this purpose by the late Rear Admiral W. S. Schley, then president of the Arctic Club. We have every reason to believe that Mrs. Russell was the first woman to gain this point and I know that it

was the first time that the stars and stripes ever floated from the summit of a volcano in Iceland.

The reading of the thermometer at the summit was zero, Centigrade; the reading of the aneroid barometer, carefully compared with the standard at the station in *Reykjavik* before starting and corrected by the same instrument for the same hour when we returned, gave the elevation of *Hekla* as 5,050 feet. This is not a high mountain but it has features peculiar to itself that render its ascent one of toil. Any person with endurance and thoughtful care can make the ascent and no one who visits Iceland, if at all interested in the topography of the country or in volcanic formations, can afford to miss it.

I climbed down to the brink of the crater upon the snow shelf to view the interior and to photograph the opposite wall. No ascent had been made for four years and at that time the local guide stated that the crater was full of snow and ice. This is the ash crater of 1845. The opening is about 450 by 360 feet. When I looked into its depths on July 20, 1909, there was no snow in the bottom and vapor was ascending. This vapor was doubtless snow evaporation. Yet, there has been some heat radiation from within to clear out this great cavity of ice and snow in four years. Fifteen minutes walk along the ridge brings the traveller to the red crater, which is about the same size as the other or northern crater but unlike it the material is red with considerable sublimated sulfur.

Hekla is by no means dead. Numerous earthquakes have occurred in its vicinity within the past three years and a large area of the ice mantle is reported as having slipped off in 1910. It is sixty-nine years since the great eruption of 1845, which is more than twice the average period of inactivity but it is nine years less than its longest period of rest. An eruption may be ex-

pected at any time. The old volcano, in spite of the slander which Burton heaps upon it, is worthy of scientific study and before its next eruption a series of observations should be taken similar to those made by Frank Perret on Vesuvius and other Mediterranean volcanoes.

The view from *Hekla* is superb. The eye is first arrested by the ridges of lava, black, red, gray, horrent and ill-boding which extend down the mountain slopes and bury themselves in the fertile soil of the distant plains. Each of the two main ridges bisects a well watered section, once fertile and now choked with sand. To the northwest, *Láng Jökull* raises its two score miles of ice-parapet, four hundred miles of unexplored Iceland; to the northeast is spread out the vast expanse of mighty *Vatna Jökull,* Mountain-Producing-Waters, an area of ice-covered tableland one hundred miles by sixty; between these two glaciers and directly north of us stands *Hofs Jökull, Hof* signifying heathen-temple, it is nearly circular and appears like the frosted dome of a mammoth cake. Between the last two *Jökulls,* stretching away into the northeast, is the *Sprengisandur,* Bursting-Sands, a mighty desert entirely void of vegetation, a dreary, desolate tract, wind-driven and life-destroying. Nearer, in the emerald plain flow the glacier-born rivers the *Thjórsá* and the *Hvitá* and a cloud of saffron sand floats in the air above the desert which we crossed yesterday. We cannot see the travellers but surely there is a train of horses there and the wind is lifting the fine sand into the sun. Turn now to the southward, look down along the tumbled chimneys and the red hornitos of *Hekla* and the first object to arrest the eye is the beautiful *Tindfjallajökull,* Peaked-Ice-Mountain, with its two ice-horns resembling the Matter-horn, protruding from an oval mound of lava and casting their blue shadows on the trackless snow.

Behind this mountain is the *Saga* country of the South, the home of the noble *Njal* and the peerless *Gunnar*. There was the scene of Iceland's great Epic, Burnt Njal. Those ribbons of limpid silver that branch from the base of *Goðalands Jökull,* Land-of-the-Gods, like reins from the hand of a chariot driver, those are the many branches of the *Markarfljót,* Boundary-Marking-River, pouring down its floods of glacial waters and volcanic sands to choke the passage in an effort to join *Heimaey* to the mainland. Across the moors, the sheep ranges and the marshes beyond, the North Atlantic, encircling the black masses of the Westman Islands, wreathes those weathered pillars with garlands of snow-white foam.

The descending clouds and the falling snow suddenly shut off the view, but the camera of the eye has caught it all in a circling panorama and the prints are stored in memory's folder to be opened at leisure. The infinite waste of the lava billows, grandeur rising from desolation, the flash of the restless rivers, the quiet of the happy plain,—these are but the halftones in Iceland's matchless print.

The descent of the mountain was quickly made and without incident. The slide down the semi-glacial cone was a matter of pure enjoyment. We passed out of the snowstorm and the cloud at the base of the cinder pile into perfect sunshine with all the loveliness of the western section to gladden the eye. Johannes rested by his nap in the snow cradle joined us in the sport of rolling lava blocks down the declivity. To roll stones down a mountain slope, pitting one against another with equal chances for winning the race, is a delightful pastime, but when the racecourse is a bed of ice and the goal a distant lava ridge against which the contestants dash themselves into powder one is apt to linger till the last desirable stone has been turned. Many a slip and tum-

ble added zest to the descent, for each slide was so much gained and no ground could be lost and we laughed at the brevity of the steps in the upward trail. We were happy, having done one of the things which we had gone to Iceland to attempt.

We found the ponies shivering in the circle of sand where we had left them. In their desire to turn their heavy tails towards the wind for a protection, each pony of the pair had walked around his tethered neighbor till a well trodden path had been produced, a narrow circle out of which they had not stepped. We ate a hasty lunch and mounted. Once down the steep rubble hill, away they went at a gallop, literally at a break-neck speed, for they were cold and hungry and longed for the grass by the brook of the harlequin ducks. I came near to having my neck broken. When we entered the amphitheater above described, I dismounted to take a photograph. The ponies always travel in single file, nose to tail, no matter how fast the pace. If one of them is held back he will whinner and do his utmost to overtake the leaders. Under these conditions of photographing I always thrust my left arm through the bridle rein. If the ponies are together the rein may be thrown upon the ground, the ponies will not stray but allow the riders to approach and remount without their stirring. Sunlocks walked rapidly around me, a somewhat disturbing element in photographing. When I remounted, the other ponies had passed out of the amphitheater and beyond vision. Sunlocks was all impatience to overtake them and I gave him a free rein for the wildest gallop I ever experienced. He followed the trail of the others, tossing the lichens from the resounding shell of lava at every leap. It happened in an instant, a flash. I just remember of thinking, while I was in the air, "Will he hit me with his hoofs?" Then all was a blank. I knew

no more till I felt his velvet nose rubbing over my face and his warm breath. How long I lay there I do not know. The crust had broken under the plunging blow of his fore-feet and as he went into the hole I shot over his head down the slope. I landed on the side of my head, straining the cords of my neck which were sore for months, in a bunch of sand and lichens, the only spot in sight that was softer than the rock. Picking up the camera case I remounted after several failures. How I finally accomplished it and rode on I do not know. Half an hour afterwards I overtook the party who had long been waiting and was sending Johannes back to look for me. I was still in a dazed condition when I rode up to Mrs. Russell and when she asked me the cause of the delay she states that I replied with this question,—

"Is my head on straight?"

It was a narrow escape for horse and rider and I have never since ridden the lava sheets at a gallop. Poor Michael Sunlocks! His fore-legs were bruised and he was stiff and lame for several days. Why he stayed with me in spite of his desire to overtake his mates I do not understand. It is a trait of the Icelandic *hestr*. I have had several tumbles from my ponies since that summer and at no time did any of them leave me. My friends sometimes ask why I extol the Icelandic pony. My explanation is that they are intelligent beyond the intelligence of other horses, the sole dependent of the traveller in a roadless country and that one of them gave up the impulse to join his companions in the grass patch when I was in sore need.

CHAPTER XI

KRISUVIK

* * * "Whose combustible
And fuel'd entrails thence conceiving fire,
Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singéd bottom all involved
With stench and smoke."

—*Milton.*

FROM *Galtalaekur* we turned towards the sea. All the long day we traversed the sands of *Hekla* and the bordering marshes. In the latter there is an abundance of the sand reed, *Elymus arenarius,* growing to a height of four feet or more with heavy panicles nodding in the wind. In times of famine the seeds of this plant have often been ground and used to make bread. Innumerable trails cross each other in these plains and exact knowledge of the locality is necessary in order to avoid wandering.

We overtook a girl of fourteen on the back of a pony. To the tail of the pony was tied a string of ponies, nose to tail in the Icelandic fashion. Each pony carried two huge cans of milk, one on either side in a bag suspended from a peg in the pack saddle. The girl made the long ride to the creamery and back each day and alone. She, like the lad at *Hruni,* was improving her time in study. As the ponies always walked to avoid churning the milk, she had ample time to read. In ways like this the youth of Iceland, deprived of modern educational advantages, employ their time in study for the pleasure it gives. When study is a pleasure, ignorance is baffled. The milk establishment being near our trail, we entered it to compare it

with the fine institutions of this character in other lands. The comparison was wholly favorable to Iceland. Within the building extreme cleanliness was manifest in the spotless floor, the white aprons and caps of the dairymaids and the glistening implements of the industry. The Icelandic creamery is on a sound scientific basis and conducted on a strictly coöperative plan. Modern machinery is employed which is operated with water power. A laboratory opens out of the weighing and sampling room and it is well equipped for expert testing. The maid in charge showed us the lists of the coöperating farms, the fat percentages and butter yields. The milk is received on the basis of the yield of butter fats and the skim milk from the separators is returned to the farmers. The butter is shipped in great casks to England and successfully competes with the fine product of Denmark. In the best grazing centers there are several of these creameries under the general supervision of the Agricultural College.

Iceland could produce many more tons of choice butter from the abundance of the nutritious grass which clothes the summer pastures, if the hay crop were of sufficient quantity to warrant the keeping of extra cows through the long winter. Grass grows in abundance but the low temperature and the short summer prevent it from coming to full maturity so that the home fields are cut long before the grass is ripe and often before it forms the seed heads. Frequently it is only six inches high at the time of cutting. Given a little warmer summer to produce more grass and Iceland would become a flourishing dairy land.

These grassy plains border two places of historical importance in Iceland. This is the margin of the *Njal Country*. At the foot of the trifingered mountain in the fertile plains of the *Markarfljót* is *Hlíðarendi*, Grass-Slope, the home of *Gunnar* of *Saga* fame. In his

Favorite Ponies, Sunlocks and Greba,

Mountains of Sulfur, Solfataras, at Krisuvik.

day *Hekla* had wrought but little of the present desolation and the land was rich in flocks and herds cared for by numerous thralls. The ice-capped mountain rose behind the farm and towards the sea sloped the productive meads. *Gunnar* and his friend, *Kolskegg,* were exiled for three winters for the part they had taken in a blood feud. As they rode down to the *Lithe* on their way to take ship to foreign shores, *Gunnar's* horse stumbled and threw him. As he rose to his feet he looked towards his pleasant home and exclaimed,—"Fair is the *Lithe;* so fair that it has never seemed to me so fair; the corn fields are white to harvest, and the home mead is mown; and now I will ride back home, and will not fare abroad at all."

If an outlawed man refused within the given time to go into the specified exile, any one could slay him without breaking any law. This his enemies took advantage of and during the following autumn killed him in his house.

Near at hand is *Oddi,* Point, as of land, made famous by the school of *Saemund Sigfusson,* the Learned, a popular center of learning in the ancient days of Icelandic glory. Here, also, in 1181 went the youthful *Snorri Sturlason* then only three years of age, into fostering. This school was called the "highest-head-stead" which signifies that it was not only the wealthiest in Iceland but the most renowed for scholarship. *Snorri* was an apt pupil, a brilliant scholar and one who delved deeply into the old Latin manuscripts, long since lost, in the rich library at *Oddi.* It was here that he acquired the knowledge of European history which gave birth to his story of the Round World, *Heimskringla,* a story of the Kings of Norway. *Snorri* was the first pragmatic historian who ever wrote in the Teutonic language. To him are indebted the German and the English historians of later days, though they do not

always take the trouble to acknowledge it. Without his gleanings from that old library at *Oddi* many pages of history would be missing. That he was faithful we may well believe when we note the following from his preface:—

"In this book have I let write tales told concerning those chiefs who have borne sway in the Northlands, and spake the Danish tongue, even as I have heard men of lore tell the same; and also certain of their lines of kindred according as they have been taught to me. Some of this is found in the Tales of Forefathers, wherein kings and other men of high degree have traced their kin; but some is written after olden songs or story-lays, which men have had for their joyance. Now though we wot not surely the truth thereof, yet this we know for a truth, that men of lore of old time have ever held such lore for truth." Again,—

"Now it is the manner of scalds, (poets), to praise those most whom they stand before while giving forth their song, but no one would dare to tell the king himself deeds, which all who harkened, yea and himself withal, wotted well were but windy talk and lying; for no praise would that be, but mocking rather."

At *Thjórsátún,* Farm of Bull-River, we found modern buildings constructed of wood with many continental conveniences. The farmer, *Ólafur Isleifsson,* had lived in Winnipeg about six years and had returned to his native land with many western ideas. He spoke some English and was glad to greet travellers from America. It was a relief to find a bed of sufficient length to permit one to stretch at full length. The food was cooked on a real iron stove and we were treated to a beef steak, the first we had seen in the country. The salmon were fresh and broiled to a turn, the coffee excellent as usual, and with rolls, cheese and eggs we made a substantial meal, having been without food

for ten hours. It was a cool night and having a slight chill, I gave the hot water bag to the host with the request that he fill it with hot water. He looked at it with a peculiar expression as if wondering how it could be used as a drinking vessel. On its return it was filled with ice-cold water. As it is the Icelandic custom to bring drinking water to the guest on retiring, the farmer evidently thought we preferred the rubber bag to the customary glass bottle. Anticipating the luxury of the hot water and promising with every shiver to restore quiet to my quivering limbs the disappointment was keen. I had not the courage to call attention to his mistake by asking a second time but replied as cheerfully as I could, *"tak,"* thanks.

This farm is located on a high bank overlooking the broad expanse of rolling lava and grass lands through which the canyon of the *Thjórsá* extends. A fine suspension bridge spans the flood and the view of the white water foaming down the rift is excellent. Beyond the river a good road, the post road, leads all the way to *Eyrarbakki,* Beach-Bank. The country is level and produces an abundance of grass. This section contains nearly all the made roads in Iceland. When we passed we noticed much activity in road construction and in the erection of telephone lines. These roads will be of great value to the farmers in this section who are just beginning to use carts with two wheels after transporting their produce on the backs of ponies for about twelve hundred years. The ponies do not enjoy the harness, but prefer the saddle. During these days we met many ponies hauling telephone poles and grading material. Every one of them had a dejected look much like that of a new convict. We fancied that the saddle ponies, as they called to the prisoners in the harness, realized the better condition of their own labor and that they looked down upon the plodders in the

thills, much as the chauffeur looks upon the pedestrian as he envelopes that individual with dust. The made road is not liked by the pony, accustomed to travel the crooked trails, which in the lowlands are always soft, and he shuns the hard roads whenever he can. The trails are much easier for the rider as there is less pounding in the saddle. After a journey of a thousand miles on the lowland and upland trails, the following summer our last day's ride was from *Thingvellir* to *Reykjavik* a distance of thirty-five miles over a hard macadamed road, and it was the hardest day's ride of the two summers.

We rode along the base of a lofty table land, a giant block of basalt shaped like a mesa, which is called *Ingölfsfjall, Ingölf's*-Mountain. At the request of *Ingölfr,* who was the first real settler in Iceland, he was buried at the top of this mountain. He said,—

"I wish to be buried there in order that I may behold my vast possessions from its summit at the last day."

The *fata Morgana* tantalized us all the afternoon as we rode down to the sea. The village of *Eyrarbakki* loomed high above the level plain and we were surprised at the extreme height of the houses until they disappeared, all but the tops. Looming up into the vibrating air and sinking into the sand they alternated with the shifting strata of variously heated air. Late in the afternoon the objects on the shore became fixed and real, like other houses in the country. We clattered up the one street by the sea to the home of *Fru Eugenia Nielsin.* It is the finest house in the village and a portion of it is over two hundred years old. There are stone and turf houses in Iceland that are much older but this one is constructed entirely of wood. The *Neilsins* are Danish merchants engaged in the wool and fish trade and importers of general supplies for the farm-

ers. We found *Fru Neilsin* a delightful hostess, who exerted herself to make our short stay one long to be remembered with gratitude. Back of the house was an excellent garden with some splendid potatoes; in front there was a well kept lawn, almost English in character, and here we enjoyed croquet at eleven at night. The village has a population of about three hundred people, mostly engaged in fishing. I examined the lumber yard and noted a high grade of Norway spruce. Although not a stick of timber grows in Iceland it can be purchased at less than half the price asked in New England.

Within the house we found refinement and comfort, culture and hospitality. As fortunes are reckoned in Iceland these people are wealthy. The household furnishings are valuable for their antiquity and the handicraft with which they were constructed. It is not the writer's intention to describe the furnishings of the different homes in which he has been entertained nor to differentiate in degrees of hospitality. The welcome and the entertainment were sincere and as cordially proffered in the poorest hut in the mountains as in the more favored homes by the sea. This being the only Danish home in the country where we were entertained, justice demands that we make it clear to the reader that the modern Dane is not lacking in the inborn hospitality of his ancient race. We frequently found proof of this on the little Danish ships plying between Iceland and Copenhagen and in Copenhagen itself. And so *Fru Neilsin* set her table with her finest service and her Icelandic kitchen maid produced a dinner that night for two hungry travellers that would have done credit to the chef of a first class hotel.

Entertainment has a different meaning to an American after he has experienced it in Iceland. What would

Americans think if two foreigners, travel-soiled, unable to speak their language, should ride upon their lawns, throw the bridle to the ground, and through an interpreter make a request, much in the nature of a demand, for food and lodging? I fear that in most cases they would be cooly invited to continue their journey. Not so in Iceland. The stranger is taken to the best room, provided with soap, towels and food. His riding habit is taken away to be cleaned and returned in the morning when the morning cup of coffee and the cakes are taken to the bed room. The breakfast, like the dinner, is of the best the house can afford, the ponies are taken to the door, you pay the modest reckoning and ride away conscious of a kindly and generous liberality.

The *Ölfusá,* as the lower end of the *Hvitá* is called, is a mighty river. It receives the waters of *Thingvallavatn* the *Laxá* the *Túngufljót, Varmá,* Warm-River, and several other tributaries. At the sea this lake narrows to half a mile by a projecting bank of sand. The flood of water pours out this narrow channel at low tide with a strong current. The water is icy cold and it is so laden with glacial clay that it is still *"Hvitá,"* White River. At *Óseyri,* Beach-Mouth, we obtained a boat and two local guides, who knew the river, to ferry us across. We waited for low tide as it is impossible to swim the ponies across this broad estuary at high tide. The boat was taken half a mile up stream to allow for the drift of the current in crossing, the ponies were stripped of saddles, bridles and packing cases and Johannes tied a cod line around the lower jaw of each horse and left the lines about eight feet long. All the luggage was placed in the bottom of the leaky boat with the packing boxes at the bottom. We sat on the top of the baggage and the two oarsmen, stout fellows, worked the boat into the stream. Johan-

nes handled the ponies in the following manner. He knelt in the stern of the dory with four of the lines in each hand. The ponies hung back for some time, as the cold and rapidly flowing water frightened them. It required full five minutes of careful coaxing to bring them into the water beyond their depth. This was a delicate bit of oar work as the current tended to sweep the boat sideways towards the shore and against the legs of the ponies. As the ponies were swept off their feet and began to swim the current caught the boat sideways and it required all the energy of the two oarsmen to back water sufficiently to relieve the strain upon the towing lines and at the same time keep the boat pointed across the stream. The tethers were kept sufficiently taut to enable Johannes to keep their noses above the water and we now discovered why Johannes had tied the cords around their jaws. He watched them with care and as soon as one nose plunged below the water he gave that pony his whole attention and with the strong cord pulled the pony's nostrils to the surface and held it there till it had blown out the water. One after another, and sometimes two at a time, they succumbed to the cold water and to the difficulty of swimming so closely together. Only one of the eight swam the entire distance without sinking and this was the fiery "Jog Joggensen," my afternoon mount. Away we went down stream, boat and horses together, the ponies checking the stern of the boat, the current swinging the bow downwards, requiring the utmost exertion of the oarsmen to point it towards the opposite shore. It seemed as if we would be swept over the bar and out to sea before we could win the beach. To add to the difficulty the boat leaked frightfully and held over a foot of water by the time we landed. The plunging and snorting ponies, the wild rush of the waters sweeping out of the estuary at low

tide, the roar of the breakers just below, the countless gulls and tern circling over our heads, the rapidly sinking boat and the anxiety depicted on the face of Johannes, made this anything but a pleasant crossing. Around us the seal thrust their shining heads above the water, questioned with their eyes our right to invade their ancient domain and dived to reappear on a different quarter. The bow touched the sand, Johannes cast off the eight lines, we jumped into the water and waded ashore and the ponies staggered up the slope and lay down exhausted in the sand. They speedily recovered, rolled repeatedly to dry themselves and we allowed them a brief rest before resaddling.

When the boat touched land at the very verge of the breakers with the sand streaming away from us as the waves crawled back into the sea, at least one member of the party gave a sigh of relief. It has always been a disputed point as to which one of us uttered that sigh. Many ponies have been lost at this crossing by being swept out to sea. We were fortunate in saving all of ours, but Johannes stated that he had lost several in this tide race. As we lifted the packing cases out of the water in the boat it was with grave fears as to the condition of the camera films, for the water had filled all spaces within those cases.

At noon we arrived at a small farm under a high cliff at some distance from the sea. It is called *Hliðarendi,* (not to be confounded with *Hliðarendi,* the home of *Gunnar*), the usual Icelandic farm in an unusual situation. The buildings stand at the back of an amphitheatre. The surrounding cliffs are five hundred feet in elevation above the buildings. At the base of the cliff three generous streams of water flow out of the mountain. This is water that has sunk into the moorland near the base of the distant mountains and has found a passage through the cracked lava. Climbing

to the top of the bluff I found an extensive moorland where numerous sheep were grazing and hundreds of whimbrels and plover. I spent two hours in stalking the plover with the camera. They finally allowed me to approach within fifteen feet of them. In the winter several hundreds of ptarmigan live upon this heath and the farmer shoots them for the English market. They are shipped in a frozen condition and are used in the London Clubs.

The view from the bluffs is extensive. At the foot of the cliffs lay the *tún* dotted with bundles of hay. Beyond the *tún* extends a waste of lava blocks and sand and then the sea, blue and surging. To the north rises range above range of the barren volcanoes of *Reykjaness,* Smoking Cape. I found the descent of the bluffs much more difficult than the ascent. The cliffs are clothed with a rich carpet of grass and an abundance of flowers in full bloom. Here the *Spiraea* lifts its purple spikes high above the grass, the dandelions and *Arnica* sprinkle the area with patches of bright yellow: beside the water pockets and embedded in the sphagnum moss the orchids bloom profusely: wild geraniums fringe the angular lava and many plants peculiar to this high latitude fill in the remainder of the floral scheme.

Mrs. Russell had considerable labor in restoring order to the packing cases and in spreading our clothes upon the rocks to dry. In the passage of the *Ólfusá,* our cases filled with water though they were supposed to be waterproof. The jog, jog, jog of the ponies had stirred up towels, soap, bread, tobacco, camera films, cocoa, tea, note books and other items and churned these ingredients into one common mass with salt water better than it could have been done with any Yankee washing machine. This was the reason we ended our journey at noon this day. The camera films were un-

injured as I had taken the precaution to place each film in a metal box and seal it. These same boxes have since been around the world with another traveller and did similar excellent service for him in the jungles of India. All camera films taken to Iceland for transportation on a pony should be soldered water proof. They are easily opened and the empty tin will take the exposed film. This can may be securely sealed against moisture by winding the joint with several turns of waterproof tape.

I turned to the hayfield and finding an unused rake I went to work, not that I needed the exercise after my climb of the bluffs, but that I might have further excuse for observing the people at their work. I have previously made several observations about the haying and the tools but there remain other items of interest. The rake may be called a fine toothed comb. It is made in the usual form of the American hand rake with the exception of the teeth, which are from an inch to an inch and a half in length and set closely together. They are whittled out of the tough and crooked roots of the Arctic birch. This implement serves its purpose admirably, for it gathers all the short fine hay. The Icelandic scythe has been described, but it remains to mention an instrument not used in America, the *reipe,* rope. This consists of two eyelets whittled out of wood or more often fashioned from a ram's horn. The eyelets are connected with a rope a foot long. To each eyelet, and at right angles to the connecting rope, there is attached another rope which is from twelve to eighteen feet in length. In use these two ropes are laid in parallel on the ground, the hay is heaped upon the center to a weight of eighty to one hundred pounds. The eyelets are then brought up to the top of the heap, the corresponding rope from the other side is then brought up to its eyelet and passed through, the

free ends are drawn taut by the force of two men, a half hitch is taken in each, the ends are then turned at right angles to their original position and passed round to the other side of the bundle and fastened just as a box is tied in a store. Out of the loose ends is fashioned a loop to hang the bundle on the pin of the hay saddle. The bundle is then thoroughly combed out with the rake and it is ready for transportation to the haystack. If it rains or if the hay is not sufficiently cured, the bundle is left in the field. Hay makes rapidly in these bundles and a long rain will not penetrate. Haying is the only agricultural pursuit in the country. Each farmer keeps account of the number of pony loads taken to the stacks each season. An average crop for the country is about 1,800,000 pony loads which average one hundred and ninety pounds per pony load. Of this hay 1,000,000 loads are taken from the wild land, that is, from the land outside of the *tún*. This wild land is the moorland, unfed patches in the pastures, islands, bogs and meadows. The *tún* is fertilized with the manure from the cow stables. Each day this material is carried out on a stretcher by the milk maids and piled in a heap. This material dries into a hard cake during the summer. When the time comes for spreading it upon the *tún* it is broken up and the fragments are placed in a toothed hopper and ground. There are hundreds of tons of this best of all fertilizers that go to waste as the soil does not need it. If the soil could be sufficiently warmed by the sun to produce garden crops Iceland would become a great market garden for Europe as its soil is exceptionally rich and fertilizer is abundant. Every farm has its potato patch and a bed of turnips in a high walled enclosure near the buildings but the farmer raises only what he needs for his own family. The ground is spaded and the potatoes are planted in beds as we plant

beets and lettuce. There may be ploughs, mowing machines, pitchforks and hayracks in Iceland but I have never seen them on any of the many farms I have visited. I have seen a photograph purporting to be from Iceland which shows some of these instruments but there are other items in the picture, such as the costumes of the people, which prove that the negative was made in Sweden.

The ride along the sea coast to *Krisuvik* is mostly a scramble over a mass of lava which is strangely contorted and blistered. A mountain bluff extends parallel with the coast line about a mile from the shore. Prior to the settlement of the country an eruption of one of the volcanoes in this region poured out a large volume of fluid lava which rolled over this bluff in several places and then meandered in various directions. During an entire day's ride we saw but two houses, comfortless homes of fishermen on a barren shore and far from neighbors. This is a bird shore. Many thousands of sea birds nest in this rough country, far away from sheep and dogs, in undisputed freedom, for they are seldom disturbed by man. Oftentimes the ground for several square rods was literally covered with them. When our trail led through these patches the old birds resented our intrusion, swooped down and pecked at the horses and at our clothing. We were forced to keep one hand in continual motion about our heads to prevent being violently hit with their wings. Over my desk hangs a quill pen made from the wing feather of the great black backed gull, which I tore from this bird as it swooped against my arm.

We took lunch this day at *Stranda Kirkja,* Church-by-the-Strand, beside a stream of brackish water which flowed from under the lava wall. It was cool but unsatisfactory as a beverage. We found it too sour to drink. It contained some acid, probably sulfuric,

though I had no barium chlorid with which to prove it. After lunch we forded the shallows at the mouth of the nearly land-locked bay of *Vogsósar,* Whale-Mouth, and descended to the shore over a billowy mass of ropy lava. Numerous tide pools were scattered about and in them were countless eider duck with their young as well as many other species. It is well for these birds and for the people who gain a livelihood from their eggs, down and feathers that the sportsman knows nothing of these breeding places and that the sound of the shotgun never wakes the echoes of these basaltic cliffs.

We found our way by following a zigzag line of cairns. It was rough travelling. Oftentimes the ponies were forced to raise their fore feet to the edge of a block of stone or lava shelf and then spring to the top like goats, again in descending these stone stairways they crouched like a cat for a spring, carefully lowered one foot into a niche, placed the other fore foot in a similar niche below it and then jumped to the lower level. Never did they slip or make a false step, left to their own guidance they picked the best places and brought us safely across a mass of fractured lava that seemed impossible for them to traverse. Certainly horses of other countries could not have accomplished this feat. Thus climbing and descending, fording shallows and circling tide pools to the annoyance of the birds we traversed ten miles of a wild and interesting country, absolutely primaeval as far as any trace of man's presence is concerned save in the scattered cairns and the deep grooves of his horses hoofs in the lava. In one place I measured a trail ten rods long across the smooth ledge that had been worn to a depth of seven inches and a width of eight inches by the tiny feet of the ponies during a thousand years of travel along this shore.

Leaving the sea we climbed a ridge of slag and ash

debris of brilliant and variegated colors. Great masses of this material, shaped like ropes of molasses candy that has been pulled, were scattered beside the trail and mingled with thousands of volcanic bombs. From this summit we looked across a green valley to *Eldborg,* Burning-Dome, and beyond to the pleasant farm of *Krisuvik.*

We were comfortably housed and more than the usual attention was given to our comfort. Here we met an old acquaintance of the *Laura,* M. phil. Carl Küchler from Varel in Oldenberg, Germany. We had found him a pleasant acquaintance, a man who had travelled widely in Iceland, speaking the Icelandic and an author of several books in German upon Iceland. We were pleased to renew the acquaintance. He has since been decorated by the King of Denmark for the work he has done in Iceland.

The columns of steam rising from the hills beyond the meadow and the roar of the escaping gases attracted our attention and it was with impatience that we changed the riding habit for a lighter one and started across the fields to examine the spot which Hooker in 1813 described as, "One of the most awfully impressive scenes that the world can furnish, or even imagination can conceive." This is strong language. Had Hooker visited the solfatara of *Krafla* his description would have been of interest. We shall see that *Krafla* is intensly more interesting than *Krisuvik.*

It seemed but a short walk, a quarter of a mile at most, from the house to the columns of steam belching from the side of the hill. Although we were accustomed to the deceptive distances in this clear atmosphere, this time we were thoroughly deluded. That walk of ten minutes lengthened into one of an hour as the distance proved to be fully three miles. Crossing the meadow we climbed a gentle slope of clay and sul-

fur to the very edge of the solfatara. What a weird and impressive scene it is! Every beauty of form and color, every horror of sound and odor are here united. Unnumbered tons of sublimed sulfur are piled in banks and pyramids at the base of the cliffs. Great pools of boiling bolus hiss, splutter and stink. The air is foul with hot hydrogen sulfid and stifling with sulfur dioxid. Wavering columns of steam render the walking dangerous as oftentimes one can not see the place where he is about to set his foot. We crunched through the beds of monoclinic crystals and frequently slumped into them to the knee and when we pulled the leg from the hole a new column of steam shot into the air. Geologists who have examined this place have had unpleasant experiences because of approaching too near to the centers of activity. Hooker states that "In endeavoring to avoid one of these unpleasant gusts, (of steam), which threatened to annoy me while I was gathering some specimens, I jumped up to my knees in a semiliquid mass of hot sulphur." What a thing of beauty is a hole in these warm sulfur needles! They are like needles, three to six inches long and glisten with the purest amber glow. The viscid mass of clay and mineral earths stick to the boots and it is often a task to withdraw the feet from the clinging mess. The appearance of the surface is deceitful, for often when it seems most secure the crust breaks and a spurt of hot steam shoots up beside the leg in a very unplesant manner. A thin hard crust of sulfur often conceals a seething mass of the same material and one literally walks, *"Perignes, suppositos cineri doloso."** Elevated rims about the sizzling pools hold the viscid mass in place except when a sudden eruption of steam causes the material to slop over the sides of the basins in a frightful manner. Add to this the steam-filled air, the

*Through fires placed under deceitful ashes.

moaning of the cauldrons, the roar of the escaping gases from a hole high up in the side of the talus and the thought that the whole area may collapse into the bowels of the earth or explode with volcanic force and the mental situation is complete.

That vent in the cliff pours out its hot gases with such a force that it sounds like the whistle of a locomotive and the sound is plainly audible in the bedchamber three miles distant. Day after day and century after century this safety valve has been sounding and it is sounding as we write,—an awful sound to unaccustomed ears, a pleasant one to those who live within the radius of this wide belt of volcanic activity, for it signifies safety from violent eruption as long as the generating forces beneath the surface are continually spent.

It has been estimated that there are no less than 250,000 tons of sulfur in this place and it is constantly increasing by sublimation from below. The hot area is on a line with hundreds of others of a like character, active or temporally quiet, extending in a line from *Krisuvik* to *Thingvallavatn*, a distance of thirty miles. This line is also on the main diagonal of volcanic activity extending from *Reykjaness* to *Mývatn* in the northeast. Over five hundred square miles of the fire peninsular is of recent volcanic origin and the subarea is highly heated. Numerous hot springs abound, fumaroles are without number, earthquakes are many, lava frequently issues from the fissures in the mountain sides and there is evidently beneath the crust of earth another Phlegethon, that flaming river of the under world in whose channel flowed flames instead of water.

Around *Krisuvik* there are many extinct craters filled with water. *Gestavatn*, Guest-Lake, near the solfatara is of this character. It is said to be without a bottom but this is because it is funnel-shaped and very deep in the center, which marks the old volcanic tube. It is

strange that in the midst of this heated territory the waters of this lake should be icy cold. It is a beautiful sheet of water, so deep and so clear that it holds the reflected blue of the sky appearing now to be a sheet of lapis lazuli and now a sapphire blaze. Around its margin a rim of grass and flowers thrive but beyond the ring volcanic rubble and patches of sulfur and clay displace the vegetation. At a greater distance the brilliant surface of *Kleifavatn,* Cliff-Lake, reflects the encircling bluffs and ragged gorges within whose recesses a small herd of reindeer seek seclusion from the traveller. Down by the sea the *Eldborg* stands, well worthy of inspection. It is a mound-shaped crater with very thin walls. It would seem as if Pluto was sparing of his solid material when he built this funnel, for he made it as frail as possible as if in haste to pour out the molten matter in a flood upon the surrounding plains. The shore side of the mountain is the home of countless puffin, skua and other aquatic birds. Along the sands of the sea the seal bask in the sunshine or crawl back to their element with the retreating tide. Taken as a whole, the *Krisuvik* region is a place of fascination, even though one stands on the thin crust of sulfur that feebly supports him, with fire and brimstone in incessant action beneath his feet and clouds of stifling and vile smelling gases enveloping him and his ears are closed to all other sounds by the thundering of the exploding steam. The beauty of the lakes and fells, the peacefulness of the little farm and the kindness of its owners make the traveller disposed to linger till the margin of time between the present and the sailing of the steamer from *Reykjavik* has been reduced to a minimum.

It was a smiling Sunday morning when we reluctantly packed for the last day of Icelandic travel and turned our faithful steeds towards their home pastures

for a much needed rest, little thinking that we would return the following season for a more extended tour and then again on the succeeding summer. On our way towards *Reykjavik* we turned aside for one more gaze at the alluring solfatara, for one more plunge into the viscid sulfur, for one more sniff of its putrid air, then, swinging around the shoulder of the smoking bluffs we wound our tortuous way to the heights above, dismounted and looked down for the last time upon that scene so fair and yet so terrible. Upon the rim of a great crater we held the ponies by the bridle rein and silently absorbed the glories of the panorama. Below,—thousands of tons of yellow sulfur sublimed in Nature's furnace sloped downward to the grassy fields awaiting the coming of some genius of industry to transmute it into the precious metal,—from the yellow mounds rose the never ending columns of odorous steam filling the air with quivering spirals and vibrating with a weird incessant roar,—beyond, the lazy sea in azure blue mirrored ten thousand waterfowl on its burnished surface,—to the west, *Hengill,* arrests the eye, its slopes wreathed in a hazy mantle of vapor issuing from the encircling springs and fumaroles,—nearer, the deep cerulean waters of the crater lakes, the home of the wild swan and golden-eyed duck, throw back the smiles of heaven,—southwest, *Reykjavik* stands white against the black and ponderous cliffs of *Esja,*—southward, *Faxafjörðr* cradles a hundred sailing craft upon its bosom and beyond the fiord, great *Snaefells Jökull* projects its cone of sparkling ice six thousand feet where the north Atlantic mingles with the icy waters of the Arctic Sea.

The ride of twenty-five miles to the capital city is over a series of craters and across the *hraun* to *Hafnarfjörðr,* Harbor-Fiord, thence by an excellent road to *Reykjavik.* The crossing of the craters is of con-

siderable interest to the geologist. The narrow trail winds down the rim, across the floor strewn with ash and scoriae then up the farther side and thus on from crater to crater till the mountain side is reached then down the mountain side by a winding, troublesome trail to the valley. Here is met as wild a scene of desolation as is to be found in the south of Iceland. The lava flowed over the valley in great billows and out to the ocean. What a commotion that was when the fluid rock slipped hissing into the icy sea, what volumes of steam filled the air, what explosions in the cooling lava as the ocean checked its destructive progress! The lava rises in mammoth blisters with numerous caves that shelter the sheep in the autumn storms. Over all is spread a thin mantle of lichens and within the crevices the Arctic willow and dwarf birch are struggling to reclaim for vegetation this awful wilderness. A wilderness it is, a desolation, a place where witches hung their devil's cauldrons and brewed their fiendish potions. So intense were their fires that their pots were ruined and when they fled they left the curled and contorted fragments to ensnare the feet of the orthodox traveller. The trail winds down the sides of the cliffs and among the towering blocks in a dizzy fashion. A portion of this territory is called *Sveiflaháls,* Rolling Hills, that is, an undulating mass of lava. On the right rise huge cliffs that have been frost-shattered and at the foot of the narrow ravines that embouche into the plain huge fans of multi-colored rubble are spread above the crumpled rock. From their coverts in the crevices and from within the little caves spring the ptarmagan while the whimbrel's call is ceaseless from the undulating hillocks. No grass grows here, no sheep scurry before the traveller and not till the *Kaldá,* Cold-River, is reached is there anything for the ponies to eat. This is a delightful place to lunch, this grass grown mound within

the river, a tiny island in the midst of ice-cold and sparkling water. The river itself is a natural curiosity, as it rises in several springs from under the mountain, like those at *Hlíðarendi,* flows merrily for two miles and then plunges into a rift to be lost forever, unless it has an underground passage to the sea.

Hafnarfjörðr is a prosperous trading village with a good harbor, a high school and many excellent homes. It contains one house reported to have been built by *Snorri Sturlasson.* As he was born in 1178 this house is of great age and worthy of a visit. It was doubtless built as reported, for tradition in Iceland is not like Virgil's Fame, it is truth. The road from this village to *Reykjavik* is of the best construction and one must admire the skill of the engineer as the pony canters around the curves, ascends the gentle grades and skirts the numerous small inlets of the sea. Many of these tiny bays indent the land, hundreds of piles of peat are drying in the August wind, sheep and cattle are scattered over the upland slopes, the late summer flowers are in full bloom, the tiny fishing craft are rocking on the shimmering sea and the wash of the water in the lava pebbles on the strand adds music to enhance the pleasure of this seaside ride. Out of the austerity of the volcanic passes, into the quiet and serenity of the uncharred meadows, comes the rider, and the load of grandeur and sublimity is lifted that beauty and charm may soothe the mind after the contemplation of these natural creations that astonish and awe. This is the pleasure road of Icelandic youth and those gentlemen who wish to display the points of the latest saddle pony from the great horse fairs of the north. If one has formed the impression that Icelanders are sedate and morose and never given to enjoyment that breeds laughter, he should travel this road on Sunday when it is thronged with country folk and city dwellers alike.

Gay groups are here and there, songs that are merry from throats that are attuned fill the air, and seated upon a jutting rock are two young people reciting to each other in this softened light that age-old story, that sweetest of all stories, love. This seaside drive is to the people of *Reykjavik* what Riverside Drive is to the people of New York City.

One afternoon in *Reykjavik* we entered the shop of a fish merchant and engaged a boat with two men to row us across the harbor to *Engey,* Meadow-Island, a few miles from the city. The price agreed upon was three *kronur,* about seventy-nine cents. We were absent seven hours. The boatmen were so considerate of our pleasure that on the return to the wharf I handed to each a *krone,* then went to the shop of the merchant and paid the three *kronur* as agreed. The following afternoon this gentleman met me in the street. He had an interpreter with him who accosted me as follows:—

"Are you the gentleman who engaged my boat to go to *Engey* yesterday?"

I replied that I was.

"Did you not agree with me for three *kronur?*"

"I did. Did I not go to your shop on my return and pay you?"

"Yes," he replied, "but on landing you gave to each of the boatmen a *krone,* you then paid me three *kronur.* The men left the money at the office last night. You have overpaid me two *kronur* and I have come to return them."

With this statement he handed to me two *kronur* which I was obliged to accept. This incident taught me that there is one country in Europe where a man makes a price, expects you to pay it and neither expects nor desires any tip. Is there any other place in Europe or in the United States in which hotel servants, railway

porters or cabmen would turn their tips over to their employer at night? But, if such a condition can be found, where is the hotel manager, railway official or stable owner who would search the next day to return a tip to the man who dared to give it? Tipping is a violation of a contract; in Iceland contracts are inviolate.

Engey is a delightful place, if one is interested in the eider duck. They breed in thousands on this and the neighboring island of *Viðey*, Wide-Island. The birds are tame and will allow one to stroke their feathers or lift them from their nests. The birds are protected for their down which is a large item of export from Iceland. When building their nests the birds pluck the down from their breasts to line the nests; when these are well lined the owner of the land robs the nests; the birds then repluck their breasts and again the nests are robbed. For the third time they pluck their breasts and are not disturbed till after the eggs hatch, when the remaining down is taken. It is interesting to note that every crevice and every space under a bunch of grass or the edge of the turf is occupied with the birds. One must walk with caution so as not to step on them. Down by the water the earliest hatched sport in the pools while the mother sits quietly by with one or two of the puffy balls perched upon her back. Above, the tern, *Kria*, so named in imitation of their cry, dart close to the nests and in a threatening manner also at the people who intrude, uttering their loud cries of *kria, kria, kria.*

Late in August we embarked in the little mail boat, the *Ceres*, homeward bound for Copenhagen. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Edward Newton of London, a fellow traveller some years before in Labrador. When we parted in Halifax we had never expected to meet again. But here we were in a remote corner of

the world, relating old trials and comparing notes of our Icelandic experiences. It was a quiet Sunday evening and many small boats hovered around the *Ceres* to bid her farewell as she hoisted her anchor and steamed down the glassy fiord. There were feelings of deep regret in departing from these shores where preconceived ideas had been so pleasantly upset by what we had seen and felt. We were leaving an island, remarkable for its physical characteristics, astonishing for its contrasts, differing greatly from every other spot on the globe. That which had chiefly attached us to Iceland was the display of integrity and moral worth, the high intellectual attainments and the sincere friendliness of its people.

ICELAND REVISITED

O cordial Iceland! Isle of charm!
Where one may roam secure from harm,
Where honest, kindly people toil
On heaving sea or barren soil;
Where welcome hand and open door
Greet ev'ry stranger to thy shore;
O charming isle! O lava land!
Once more I tread thy witching strand.

O lava land! O land of light!
Where summer brings no shade of night,
Thy ice-capped Jökuls shining far
Like prismic ray of distant star;
Thy trackless wastes of heath and sand,
They basalt ridges, grim and grand,
O land of frost! O land of fire!
Thy charm hath filled my soul's desire.

O land of darkness! Land of night!
Where winter sheds no ray of light,
Where Arctic storms beat on thy shore
And snows lie deep on berg and moor,
In humble homes thy people rest
Content with life, serene and blest.
O land of night! O Arctic land!
May Storm-king rule with gentle hand.

O glacier land! O land of steam!
Where chasms yawn and waters gleam,
Thy noxious gases whistle shrill
From red-hot cliffs in ice-clad hill;
Thy horrent lava spreading o'er
The fertile, grazing meads of yore.
O land of geysers! Land of snow!
May Vulcan stay the powers below.

O isle of poets! Isle of song!
Whose lines thy early deeds prolong,
Thy Sagas filled with pagan strife,
With blood for blood and life for life,
'Till came the Cross with Christian sway
To rule the isle in gentler way.
O isle of story! Snorri's isle!
Long may the Muses on thee smile.

O land of light! O lava land!
Where sturdy Vikings took their stand,
To brave the storm-tossed Arctic main,
To burst the links of Harald's chain,
To found a nation, strong and free,
Whose basal bond is Liberty.
O land of heroes! Land of lure!
God grant your freedom may endure.

—*W. S. C. R.*

CHAPTER XII

SEYÐISFJÖRÐR

"This land of Rainbows spanning glens whose walls,
Rock-built, are hung with rainbow-colored mists—
Of far-stretched *Meres* whose salt flood never rests—
Of tuneful Caves and playful Waterfalls—
Of Mountains varying momently their crests."

—*Wordsworth.*

I VISITED the east coast of Iceland on two consecutive summers. The first visit was in 1910 with Mrs. Russell; the second trip to this realm of fog was in 1911 as the geologist of the Stackhouse Expedition to *Jan Mayen.* During the former year we stopped at *Eskifjörðr,* Ash-Fiord, *Seyðisfjörðr,* Cooking-Fiord, and *Vopnafjörðr;* during the latter visit the Expedition spent several days in the eastern fiords especially at *Faskrudsfjörðr, Seyðisfjörðr* and in the bight of *Langaness,* Long-Cape. We were storm bound for two days at *Langaness* and then we returned to the south and followed the Norwegian tramp steamer *Ask* into *Faskrudsfjörðr.* Here we recoaled, then returned to the protection of *Langaness,* made slight repairs to our engine and finally reached *Jan Mayen.* On our return from the north we again entered *Seyðisfjörðr* for coal and repairs, before putting south to *Faroe.* These wanderings along this mountainous and fiord-cut coast have given me ample opportunity to examine the wonderful formations, to penetrate the fiords, climb some of the mountains and explore the waterfall regions as well as to observe the people engaged in fishing. The narration in this chapter is the result of the observations and experiences of two summers without any attempt to give the dates.

When the Fog Lifted,—Entrance to Seyðisfjörðr.

Washing Split Cod at Faskrudsfjörðr.

Once more in Icelandic waters, this time off the east coast. It had been a smooth run up from *Faroe,* with a pleasant ship's company and a placid sea. Morning enveloped us in a fog dense as a dripping blanket. Confidently the *Botnia* held her course with her siren sounding every minute. At two in the afternoon the echo of the whistle announced that we were under the lava cliffs of Iceland, but they were invisible. The ship was stopped but she drifted strongly with the current rushing out of a fiord. For a long time we had heard the whistle of a steamer and even the voices of her invisible crew. It recalled to our minds the phantom ship of *Pierre Loti.* Suddenly she burst into view, the *Scarpa,* a Scotch whaler, and she ran under our starboard bow to enquire of our skipper his position.

The rote of the waves upon the cliffs of *Krossaness,* Cross-Cape, so named from the snow formations in the cross-shaped ravines upon the mountain slopes, grew louder. Just as many of the passengers were anxious for their safety, we shot out of the wall of fog, like a needle through a blanket, into clear sunshine. Behind us the fear-breeding fog, before us the sentinel mountains of a sunken valley whose bottom was filled with placid water; it was *Reydarfjörðr,* Whale-Fiord. The full glory of the glacier-carved and snow-bonneted mountains, streaked with tumbling cascades and strips of green sphagnum burst upon us.

At midnight we dropped the anchor at *Eskifjörðr* at the time when twilight and dawn mingled their changing colors. Such sunset glows upon snow and multi-colored lava are seldom witnessed elsewhere. A flush of rose-purple fell upon the cliffs and crept slowly upward to the snow line. The sun was setting in the north to rise in the north within the next few moments. The livid shades poured through the mountain pass upon the water in the free-way and streamed up the

snow-mantled lava; up, up the streamers went, deepening the purple hues upon the reddish basalt, tinging the icy domes with a roseate flush. The village was asleep. Our whistle called forth the postmaster and a few laborers, the latter to assist in exchanging a portion of our cargo for fish, wool and eider down. We rowed ashore and climbed the mountain at the back of the hamlet to an elevation of 1800 feet to a large waterfall plunging beneath a snow arch which spanned the gorge.

At the border of the snow we gathered many Arctic flowers in full bloom, among them the purple *Armaria* and the dainty blue *Pinguicula* as well as two species of *Orchids*. Standing on top of the snow arch, which reverberated with the roar of the cataract beneath, we looked over the midnight fiord. A whale was anchored in the offing awaiting the flensing knives while over it the gulls were wheeling in anticipation of the morning feast; a woman was washing clothes in the brook and below her a boy was cleaning trout; our steamer was discharging her cargo by means of row boats, but all else in fiord and hamlet was quiet. The long fiord shimmered with the mingled midnight lights and the purple-tinted spires of the mountain ranges were reflected in these vast depths. This was Iceland's second greeting, an earnest of the glories we were to experience during the coming weeks.

Eskifjörðr has long been a place for the cutting up and rendering of whales, in ancient times the Viking ships, after their long passage from Norway, found a haven in these eastern fiords. The place is renowned among geologists for pure crystals of calcium carbonate, Iceland spar, "double refracting spar." From this fiord thousands of pieces of this transparent crystal have gone forth to shine in practically all of the science laboratories of the world. The vein has been worked

since early in the seventeenth century. It is now nearly exhausted. The best deposit was in a basalt cavity thirty-six feet long, fifteen feet wide and ten feet high. It is on the farm called *Helgustaðir* an hour's ride from the village. When discovered, the deposit filled the cavity. Some of the crystals were three feet across and were perfectly transparent. This is the material used in making the celebrated Nicol's prisms and seldom has any spar suitable for this delicate work been found elsewhere than in Iceland. Good deposits have recently been located in the west of Iceland so that optical laboratories may still be supplied with this unique and valuable crystal. Doubtless other deposits will be found when the lavas have been thoroughly explored. Included crystals and pockets of crystals of various kinds are characteristic of the Icelandic lavas.

The east coast of Iceland is deeply indented with numerous fiords, each of a different formation though the prevailing rock is pre-glacial basalt with small outcrops of liparite and granophyre. All of the fiords are navigable and the head of each fiord receives a river which tumbles from the table lands in a series of grand waterfalls. *Berufjörðr,* Naked-Fiord, in the southeast is noted for its variegated lavas and the number and variety of its crystals. The meteorological station for the east coast is located here.

Faskrudsfjörðr, is one of the most beautiful of the east-coast fiords. It is a glaciated valley that rises to an elevation of 1000 feet, in a curve like the hull of a ship, where it meets the ragged pinnacles and summer snows. From this line the mountains rise in serrated ridges and frozen spires which are thrust up through the folds of perpetual fog. This fog blanket excludes the warmth of the sun, holding the snows throughout the summer. As a result scores of streams tumble down the naked gulches, leap from the precipices

and cascade over the talus into the fiord. If one stands at the snow line on one side of the valley and looks across to the opposite side, he may sometimes obtain a momentary glimpse of the distant ridges when a chance gust of wind whirls through a mountain pass and sweeps away the fog mantle.

Out of the fog we came one morning into this quiet harbor after dodging about for hours between the basalt pillars at the entrance, those great, square piles of lava, the clanging rookeries of the east coast, where many a ship, more stanch than our little *Matador,* has broken her ribs on the jutting ledges. We anchored in midstream while the *Ask,* which had prior claim to the single wharf, took on board her cargo of fish. This gave the members of the *Jan Mayen* Expedition ample time to explore the valley and climb the steep sides of the fiord. We had twenty four hours and every hour was spent in tramping, photographing and taking samples of the lavas, crystals and flora.

This is the station of the French fishing fleet during the spring and summer. For a long time they have had rights in this fiord and in the adjacent waters and it is a virtual French colony, presided over by the Abbé and the French Consul, who is resident at *Reykjavik.* The treaty is with Denmark as Iceland can not make a treaty. It has been advantageous to the French but otherwise to the local Icelandic fishermen. The younger fishermen of Iceland have obtained power boats for fishing off the coast and they look upon the French as poachers upon their ancient domain and rightfully. The French do not confine themselves to their own territory but, like the English trawlers, poach extensively under the sheltering folds of the fog. An Icelandic sheriff and his deputies recently rowed out to an English trawler that was fishing within the international limit to expostulate with the captain. They were politely in-

vited on board. The trawler steamed away and when these innocent men came to their senses they found themselves in a back alley of an English fishing port. The English often go ashore to steal sheep and commit other depredations upon the unprotected farmers of the remote districts. This has been going on for centuries and is the real reason why the Icelander does not love the English. As far as I could learn the French do not commit these acts of piracy on this shore. They maintain a company Trading Post and compete with the local shopmen in the village trade. The fact that the French fishermen are Roman Catholics is distasteful to the Icelanders, who are Lutheran, both in profession and practice. There is a large cemetery near the mouth of the fiord where many of the fisher folk of France for several generations have found a rest from their tiresome and lonely labor in the fog. How dreary it looks! How different from the places where their relatives of sunny France are laid away! It is simply a little enclosure on the soilless hillside with a rude wood slab upon which is placed a brief inscription and over all is hung the fog, the endless, pitiless fog in which they met their death. But what does it matter? They rest as well in these forgotten mounds as the greater ones of France within their marble mausoleum. The Abbé remains during the fishing season and has charge of a private hospital as well as an oversight of the spiritual affairs of his people. The hospital is a blessing. The life in the fog is lonesome, dreary, chilling, with labor at the hand lines day and night, with constant dread of being run down by steamers prowling through the fog, with no change month after month, unless sickness gives the fisherman a furlough in the hospital. It is one long monotonous toil which induces melancholia. *Pierre Loti* sensed the true situation and caught the local color in his *Pêcheur d' Islande.*

A great fault extends across the fiord. In the bed of a stream which flows through this ravine, the writer found some large and exceptionally valuable zeolites. Iceland is famed among geologists for these crystals. I have gathered them in many places in the country, north, east and west, but never have I found them in such beautiful formations and of so fine a quality as in this fiord. I also obtained excellent specimens of chalcedony embedded in the basalt as inclusions. The greatest find was a fossil tree, of the *Tertiary Period,* whose diameter was five inches. During the process of infiltration it was filled with minute crystals of zeolites and masses of chalcedony. After supper we rowed across the fiord, a distance of two miles to examine the other end of this same fault and to see the fine waterfall which comes down from the snow ravines above. Here the rock is thickly spattered with zeolites, the meanest of which would be a good find in other localities. One thing vexed my English friend sorely. At a depth of several feet in a basin of running water there is a cavity, hemispherical in form, with a diameter of fourteen inches, entirely lined with fine amethysts. He desired to take it back to England and I left him gazing at it earnestly and wondering how it could be obtained. He decided to leave it only when I threatened to return to the *Matador* with the boat and leave him to walk around the head of the fiord, a distance of ten miles.

At three in the morning we put to sea, bound for *Jan Mayen.* As we left the mouth of the fiord a dense fog, a fog so thick that our mast head light shone no brighter than a glowworm and the forms of the forward watch were not distinguishable from the bridge. The captain miscalculated his position, thinking he was well outside of the rookeries, and turned the yacht northward into the tide rips and cross-channels that charac-

terize this, the most dangerous portion of the entire Icelandic coast. Whalebacks and skerries abound in these waters and there are no lighthouses, no bell buoys no fog horns to warn the master. He must rely entirely upon himself and take long chances. In crossing the tide current between two of the small islands the *Matador,* now wallowed deeply in the trough of the wave and now rode airily upon its angry crest of curling and running water. It was here that the *Matador* and her little group of scientists nearly ended their ocean voyages. The lookout was doubled. We steamed with great caution, for the fog was thick. Suddenly the breakers boomed all around us. We jumped to the crest of an angry wave, growling and curling backwards with white breakers. Sideways the yacht slid downward into the yeasty trough. The ragged ridge, like an apparition clothed in steel-gray garments of shifting mists, suddenly loomed dead ahead and under the prow.

"Stop," rang the signal in the engine room.

"Hard-a-port," was the sharp order to the helmsman. Sideways we sheered from those yawning and serrated jaws, which have crunched many a Viking sea-horse in former days and many a fishing smack in the modern. Would the trough of the sea well up in season for our keel to clear that ridge? Our lives hung upon the favorable and instantaneous answer to that question which was in the mind of each observer of that horrid sight. With a roar as of impending doom the waters returned and smashed against our beam so fiercely that everything on board was moved which was not actually nailed down. The sleepers were tossed from their bunks, there was a clash and clatter of pots in the galley and a sizzle of hot steam from the upset kettles. The faces of the few who viewed those yawning, greedy jaws took on an ashy hue, the grayness and

pallor of the fog itself. We recovered our breath in a long sigh of relief as the *Matador* with "full-speed-ahead" slipped through the foaming waters into the steady roll of the deeper sea. That was an experience which those who participated in it never wish to repeat.

Seyðisfjörðr is the most picturesque of the eastern fiords. I have entered this fiord three times, once in fog and twice in the full sunshine. It was one of the earliest places visited by the Vikings and has ever since been the resort of the fishermen on account of its excellent harbor. The Iceland cable to Denmark by the way of the *Faroe Islands* lands here. In old times it was called the "Cooking Fiord," (the name is still retained), because of the ease with which the small craft could run in from the sea to prepare their meals. The outer end is marked by two fine mountains rising abruptly from the water. The entire fiord is a recent glacial valley and its sides are marked by prominent raised beaches.

Going ashore and wandering along the single street that skirts the upper end of the fiord, I met an Icelander who spoke good English and we entered into a protracted conversation about the United States. He had formerly lived in North Dakota. During the American war with Spain he enlisted to serve under the American flag and was ordered to the Philippines, where he remained till he had completed his term of enlistment. When he received his discharge, the lure of the fatherland, the indescribable charm of the ancient fiords was too strong, so that, like many of his race who have emigrated to our Northwest, he returned to the haunts of his youth. His frugality in America had yielded him a competence for the remainder of his life in Iceland; the story of his wanderings in distant and tropical lands makes him as welcome among the fishermen during the long winters as were the scalds in the banqueting

halls of Iceland's ancient lords.

Aside from the towering mountains, precipitous and snow-crested, and the beautiful fiord between, the fascination of the valley lies in the upper end of the fiord with its half-cylindrical basin and its bisecting river roaring down its dozen waterfalls. From the extensive moorlands of *Vestdalsheiði,* West-Dale-Heath, flows a voluminous river, which enters the fiord in a regular series of waterfalls of marvelous beauty. The falls differ from each other in height of plunge and in the rock formation and from fall to fall the river slides down a steep gradient in an angry swirl of tossing waters. The upper fall is the finest in the series and has a sheer plunge of nearly a hundred feet over a perpendicular wall of lava into a broad basin. On either side of the valley numberless and turbulent cascades roll downward from the melting snows of the tangled ridges that mark the border of the great moorland plateau. The valley is long and narrow with the river in the very center and the river system may be likened to the skeleton of a serpent in which the backbone is the main stream and numerous and opposite ribs are the tributaries. There is a point near the wharf, at an elevation of five hundred feet above the fiord, which one may win in half an hour, that commands a view of the entire valley. If there is no fog this slight climb is richly rewarded. One stands upon a jutting point of lava at the head of one of the cascades, views the main stream with its terraces and every silver thread that extends from the snow line to the river. At his feet is the fiord with its fleet of fishing smacks, down the fiord is the open sea, the shining "swan-path" of the *Sagas.*

Near by is a strong showing of copper carbonate in the vesicula lava. All of the tubes and cavities are lined with this beautiful green encrustation. On the

opposite side of the mountain there is a similar formation so that it is possible that there is a liberal deposit of this useful metal in this mountain. If it is located it will be easy to extract it as there is an abundance of waterpower within easy access for mechanical and electrolytical purposes.

One afternoon when the fog hung heavily upon fiord and mountain, with four of my *Matador* companions I set out to examine a glacial moraine which hangs upon the side of *Bíhólsfjall,* upon which I had looked with longing eye through a telescope the previous summer. Upward we climbed and when at an elevation of only a hundred feet above the fiord, the entire valley, all its buildings, the fiord and its shipping disappeared from view as if by enchantment. Many sounds came up through the fog in a strange jumble of discordant notes; a Norwegian tramp steamer was stowing a cargo of clip fish, hammers clanged in the little machine shop at our feet, so near that we could have tossed a stone upon its roof and the clack-clack-clack of a pony's hoofs pacing the highway in haste to take its rider into a refuge from the storm. The rain came down in earnest but there was no wind. This was a strange condition under which to climb a mountain, whose slopes are deeply scored with crossing gullies, where patches of moorland stretch between ridges of talus and one may easily lose his way, but we desired the experience and difficult as was the climb it was well worth all the effort. If we separated from each other three rods we were lost to view. It was uncanny, this wandering among the gullies and carrying on a conversation with moving and invisible beings, almost ghostly. The fog, like fleecy blankets, hung around and rolled over us in wisps like broad bands of cotton, so that we literally stretched and tore it as we climbed through it. Two of my companions clung to the brook, where

plant life was more vigorous, and it was a wise precaution if one did not know the direction of the ravines or the slope of the moorland. With the other two I turned toward the southwest and we were guided by the number of the ravines we crossed and the roar of a waterfall on the escarpment. We traversed a boggy area and finally reached the extensive moraine that was formerly pushed over the cliffs by the moving ice and is now being worked by the winter frosts and the deluge of water descending during the summer from the melting snows on the heights above. By the aneroid we had climbed to an elevation of 2,000 feet above the fiord. Here we turned and descended by the steep stairway of columnar basalt to the valley, not once having been out of the thick fog. Our tramp yielded considerable profit in the examination of the debris on the mountain side where we found excellent specimens of water-worn liparite, that the glacier had transported from the interior in former days. We also found fine specimens of chalcedony geods. These were enclosed in the pre-glacial lava, but the frost action has split the rock and the geods are easily removed. They are about the size of goose eggs. As we stumbled through the darkness of the fog, unable to choose our way for more than a rod at a time, there came to my mind that well known passage in Isaiah,—

"I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."

During one trip up the east coast from *Seyðisfjörðr* to the Arctic Circle we enjoyed perfect sunshine, a rare phenomenon and worth a transatlantic voyage to witness it. I know of no grander scenery of sea, fiord, and mountain than this east coast. As one enters the broad bay of *Vopnafjörðr,* under clear weather condi-

tions, the distant glacier of *Vatna Jökull* dazzles the eye as the sun shines upon its melting surface and is reflected with the luster of a mirror. The extreme barrenness of mountain and shore belies the verdure of the quiet vales between the scattered ridges. The mountains rise directly from the sea to a great height and the scorched lava, the sepia-colored liparite, the ashes and waterfalls yield wonderful shades of color. Within the shadows of the cliffs the tiny fishing craft like great gulls quietly await their prey.

On another trip over this same course, the fog closed in upon us suddenly and unexpectedly. At first there was a haze, a sun-streaked mist low on the water,—a moment, and mountain, shore and sea were closed to view. We put further out to sea to avoid the coast fog but the wind freshened and soon a gale was blowing. We were off *Langaness,* Long Cape, and almost on the Arctic Circle. Sea and wind bore down so heavily upon the little *Matador* that we were obliged to seek the protection of the cape, not daring to round it in the storm, and we cast anchor in *Eiðisvik,* Creek-Isthmus. As suddenly as the fog had appeared a few hours before, so now the Arctic Sea sprang into action and bore down upon the cape with great violence. We reached anchorage none too soon and there we remained with straining cables for forty-eight hours while the full fury of the blast blew itself to pieces. The wind came out of the north and it was cold, the waves ran high upon the bluffs of the *Ness* and all the sea fowl sought the shelter of its crevices. Out at sea a mere speck rose and fell upon the white-capped waves. With time it grew larger and we preceived that it was a belated dory retreating from the storm. It came straight under our stern and we noted that it was heavily laden with cod and rode deeply in the water. Four red capped Faroese manned its long oars and under

less experienced oarsmen the boat would surely have swamped. If one wishes to observe the skill and power of men at the oars, let him not attend a college boat race on a quiet inland river, rather let him behold the hardy sons of the *Faroe Islands,* inured from childhood to the stormy waters of the north, bring their heavily laden boat out of the tempestuous Arctic Sea and beach it in safetly on a stony shore.

I think that this is the most dreary spot in all Iceland. It is as lonesome and forbidding as the uninhabited and bleak coast of *Jan Mayen* four hundred miles to the north. A few rods from the shore there is a small lagoon and on the far side a few small houses, three I believe. The people live by fishing for there is scarcely enough grass for the few sheep and four cows that graze at the margin of the bird-infested lagoon. The cliffs and mountains that tower above the lagoon must be beautiful in sunshine, but it is otherwise in storm, and fog and Arctic storms prevail most of the time.

In a torrent of rain and with the wind blowing as only the unrestricted winds of the Polar Ocean can blow, five of us ventured to lower a boat and row ashore to beach it where we had observed that the *Faroese* had done the same the previous night. The entire beach is littered with drift wood consisting of bits of bark, branches and heavy timber. All of the material that I examined proved to be larch. A few trees bore the marks of the axe, but most of them had been torn up by the roots in some great river freshet and had been swept out to sea, probably from the great rivers of Siberia, the Lena, Obi, Kolyma and Yenisei. As I write I have before me a thick piece of bark from a Siberian larch that I picked up on this shore. What a voyage it has made! Whence came it and how long was its unlogged voyage? It is not in imagination that we scan its record. Though not in figures stating lati-

tudes and longitudes and not in characters of ink, yet its great Polar voyage is clearly revealed to him who knows the currents of the north, the prevailing winds and the drift of the ice floes. This bit of bark passed out to sea during the spring floods that make such havoc in the Siberian forests; it became embedded in the ice, as did Nansen's *Fram*. Slowly it drifted with the pack, now backwards under the pressure of the wind, now lifted in a great pressure ridge as two opposing packs met; now under the influence of wind and current it made progress and, again like the *Fram*, was liberated from the ice west of Spitzbergen and drifted southward to find lodgement on this bleak cape. Fifty miles away, on *Rauðagnúpa*, Red-Peak, in 1905 was picked up the Bryant-Melville cask, which had been placed on the pack ice north of Point Barrow in 1899. The elapsed time from the placing of this cask on the ice by Captain D. N. Tilton of the American whaler, *Alexander*, to the date of its discovery by the Icelandic farmer, Vigfus Benidiktsson, was five years, eight months and fourteen days. We have not the space in which to discuss the Great Polar Current but we can assert that this piece of larch bark, yes, and the thousands of larch trees, that come to land on the north coast of Iceland and in Driftwood Bay in *Jan Mayen*, have journeyed over or near the North Pole. The wood is a boon to the Icelanders as it is used for fuel and in the construction of their houses.

On the beach I found a mass of spermacetti weighing over two hundred pounds that had been cast up by the sea. I also gathered many pumice fragments, worn by abrasion into balls and egg-shaped masses. The character of this pumice shows that it came from the great eruption of *Askja*, Bowl, one hundred and twenty-five miles away. It was probably blown into the eastern *Jökullsá*, Ice-Mountain-River, floated out to sea

and was then driven north by wind and current to this shore. Among all the flotsom on this stormy shore the strangest was a find of tropical plants that had drifted with the Gulf Stream past the north of Norway, thence eastward to Nova Zembla, then north and west towards Franz Josef Land and then west towards Spitzbergen where it was liberated and came down with the Polar drift from the Siberian forests as above mentioned. Here the Tropics and the Arctic meet on the Arctic Circle.

We shot many birds on the shore for museum specimens and enough for an ample feast for our entire party. We came on board again after several hours of tramping in the driving rain and in a temperature close to the freezing point. It was a fine experience and we ran no risk save in beaching and launching of our little boat. When we had changed our clothing and had partaken of a hot meal we felt amply repaid for the exertion as the examination of the drift material on the shore was well worth while.

I quote from my journal of 1911.

"It is midnight. The wind is blowing a full gale which is periodically accented by gusts of higher velocity. The *Matador* is straining at her cable in an alarming manner. The rigging creaks and groans as the boat rolls in the blast. The sea is running high, the rain descends in torrents and the spray from the crests of the waves is driving over us in sheets and slashes against the windows of the tiny deck cabin. On the shore, where we landed this noon the breakers are rolling heavily and we can hear the rumble and grinding of the rocks as the water rushes back into the sea. If our cable parts we must be driven onto the shore. The Baron* has come on deck to bid me good night.

*This was Baron Axel Klinckowström, of Stockholm, a member of our scientific corps.

"It is rough outside the Ness tonight, judging by what we are getting in here," I remarked.

"We may be thankful that we are snug here and not being driven before the gale out there," he replied. "Many a ship has gone down to Davy Jones' Locker off that point in just such weather as this. Do you known that the *Fridtjof* lies at the bottom of the Ness?"

"What of the *Fridtjof,* Baron?"

"She was the vessel in which I went to the Antarctic in 1903 to resuce Nordenskiöld. He had been rescued by the Argentine Frigate, *Urugua,* a few days before our arrival and we got back to Stockholm in April 1904. The *Fridtjof* took us through the Antarctic ice pack and brought us safely home and now she lies out there on those submarine lava crags. In spite of the roughness of our present position, we may well be thankful that the *Matador* has her anchor well gripped to the bottom of this little shelter. Good night."

On our first visit to the east coast of Iceland we left *Vopnafjörðr* early in the morning, with beautiful weather and a placid sea. The water was unrippled save where the guillemots and puffins dived as the steamer approached. It was so warm that we lounged on the deck under an awning and thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of the first crossing of the Arctic Circle. There was nothing to suggest the severity of the north in this warm sunshine with no wind and certainly no ice. *Langaness* loomed high on our port and over the black bluffs countless birds were hovering in a querulous mood. How different was this experience from that of a year later in the same locality when the *Matador* was struggling to reach *Jan Mayen!*

In the afternoon we anchored in the open waters off *Húsavik* and rowed ashore for a few enjoyable hours while the *Botnia* was taking on board bundles of wool and bales of fish. *Húsavik,* House-by-the-Creek, is the

place where the first known house in Iceland was built. Here it was that Gardar, the Swede, who first circumnavigated Iceland in 864, spent the winter. The village is a thriving trading station, the outlet for large quantities of wool and fish, skins and feathers collected here from a wide region. Pack trains arrive daily in the summer from the interior and the ponies, laden with big sacks, present a pretty picture as they wind down the mountain side into the village. The departure of the pack train is even more picturesque, as the ponies are buried under bundles of every conceivable shape; provisions, mostly rye, sugar and coffee, farming tools, furniture and lumber, the latter fastened by one end to the saddle while the other end drags on the ground. The Icelandic farmer is a past master in the art of loading a pony. In former days large quantities of refined sulfur from the *Mývatn* region were taken to this port on the backs of the ponies. There remain thousands of tons of good sulfur for the coming of capital and energy backed with business acumen.

Near *Húsavik* on the shore of *Skálfandi Bay,* Trembling, there is a geological formation unique in Iceland. It is a small area of old *Pliocene* crag, containing fossil shells, mostly the *Venus Icelandica,* embedded in clay, sand and marl. Some of the shells are filled with calcarious crystals. *The *Pliocene* is the most recent portion of the *Tertiary Age,* geologically speaking, and in a country so completely volcanic as is Iceland, this corner is of great interest to geologists as it helps to fix the age of the basalts relatively. This *Pliocene* section is practically the only section found in the country, though mention has been made above of a *Tertiary* tree fossil which I found in *Faskrudsfjörðr.* There is some lignite in this deposit and a thorough examination of

*About seventy-five per cent. of the molluscs that lived at this period of the world's history are represented by living species to-day.

the marls will yield further data for an interesting discussion. Lignite has been found in a few other portions of the country. On the slender strength of this evidence, during the summer of 1910 two Englishmen who presented engraved cards as civil and mining engineers, coal experts and a few other specialties, traversed a large portion of Iceland looking for a coal deposit. I met them on three different occasions and they were still looking for coal. There is no better country in the world in which to "look" for coal than Iceland for one may transmit this pastime to his children with no fear that his offspring will ever lack an occupation. The fierce volcanic fires that have raged in the bowels of this country and seared and blistered its surface would have effectually destroyed this substance had it ever existed. One might as well search for tinsel in a furnace as for coal in Iceland.

We visited the new church to examine the fine old altar piece, painted on wood over three hundred years ago. It is in an excellent state of preservation and the people are justly proud of this relic. Beside the road in front of the church there is an alms box on a post. Beside it hangs the key on a nail. There is a request in English, German, French and Icelandic for contributions for the benefit of the widows and orphans of those who have lost their lives at sea. We wondered if an alms box with its key in a similar position would be a profitable arrangement for charity in America or in any other country of Europe. This is another evidence of the honesty and integrity of the native.

There came on board the *Botnia* at *Húsavik* three gentlemen with whom I was to associate a good deal during the coming year on the *Matador,* Walter Friedeberg, F. R. G. S., of Berlin, Baron Axle Klinckowström and his son Harald of Stockholm, Sweden. They were bound for *Mývatn* to collect birds for the Museums

of Berlin and Upsala. The Baron proved to be a rare entertainer, he speaks several languages with fluency, he is a man of profound learning, a scientist with several volumes in Swedish and German to the credit of his versatile pen. He has travelled from Spitzbergen to the Antartic, associated with some of the best known explorers and scientists. He had many an anecdote with which to entertain the company.

Late in the evening we steamed across the bay towards *Akureyri,* Corn-Land. At midnight we passed close to the coast beyond *Flatey,* Flat-Island, and the atmosphere was so clear that we had perfect views of the old craters along the shore. There are four of them and their rims coincide. The half of the craters next to the ocean has been blown out so that they present the appearance of four huge clam shells standing on edge with the concave sides towards the observer. The interiors are scorched and blistered and give a suggestion of the fierce fires that once raged within these walls. We passed up the *Eyjaförðr,* Island-Fiord, the longest and finest of the many fiords in Iceland, and at five in the morning, long ere the town awoke, we tied up to the little wharf in *Akureyri.* Our sea journey was at an end. Our guide and ponies having arrived from *Reykjavik* the night before, we left the comfortable steamer without regret to spend a month with the ponies, to explore new regions, to enjoy the meadows, moors and mountains of a marvellous land.

CHAPTER XIII

MÝVATN

"The lands are there sun-gilded at the hour
When other lands are silvered by the moon,—
The midnight hour, when down the sun doth pour
A blaze of light, as elsewhere at the noon."

—*Anon.*

OLAFUR EYVINDSSON had crossed the country from *Reykjavik* by way of the western dales with a train of eight ponies. The packing boxes, saddles and provisions had been forwarded by the coast steamer, so that when we landed from the *Botnia,* thanks to the faithfulness of Helgi Zoëga, everything was in readiness for our departure. At one in the afternoon we entered a launch and crossed the broad *Eyjarfjörðr.* On the beach we found a farmer with ponies saddled and waiting for our departure to *Mývatn,* Midge-Lake. Ólafur had taken the precaution to drive the ponies around the upper end of the fiord and across the marshes at low tide the previous evening for pasturage as grass is scarce in *Akureyri* and the charges are excessive.

We left the bulk of our provisions at the house of the farmer, since we would not require them in the region we were about to visit and it was necessary to return to *Akureyri* to set out upon our long journey across the country. We ascended the bluff and turned northwards to climb the mountain along a diagonal.

Once more in the saddle, with the length of the summer and the width of Iceland between us and the steamer that would bear us from *Reykjavik* to Denmark. Our trip up the east coast and the stops at the trading posts had been pleasant and full of interest but the real work, and the enjoyment that is born of it, was before us. It

Goðafoss, the Icelandic Niagara, on the Skjalfandafljöt.

Island Craters in the Mývatn from Skútustaðir.

was with a spirit of exultation that we turned the ponies into the narrow trail that winds up the mountain side and, after a year of absence, felt the motion of our little steeds. Step by step we climbed the gradient; little by little the fiord below narrowed and lengthened; the sounds of the fishermen and the bustle of the shipping diminished and finally disappeared altogether. The mountain rose in a wild tumble of treeless ridges and ice-crowned escarpments, scored with shining glaciers and coursed by numberless waterfalls and trickling rivulets that resolved the great silence into a musical cadence. We "knew the land of smiling face," we understood from experience that there were bridgeless and troublesome rivers to cross, morasses to negotiate or in which to founder, smoking solfataras and trackless wastes of lava, deserts of sand and glacial moraines to cross between the northern and southern coasts. But the spell of Viking Land was upon us and we realized that for the summer it was all our own,—free to anyone who would take the trouble to explore,—to roam when and where we willed, unfettered by time tables, with no porters, cabbies nor waiters to break the spell, no fences to obstruct, no "trespass forbidden" to turn us aside, no man to say us nay. The roar of the locomotive and the purr of the motor had been left far behind as also the jostling of ubiquitous tourists with their satellites the guides. A day of delight in the saddle was to be followed each day by a better one; an evening welcome at a humble farm and a heartfelt God-speed in the morning. Our only limitation, the ponies. These promised well at the start. They had been carefully chosen and at the end of the long and difficult journey proved their worth.

The ascent of *Vaðlaheiði,* Wade-Heath, in sunshine is one of the best rides in Iceland. The long fiord opens out to the Arctic Ocean at our feet and the dis-

tant *Jökulls* rise into prominence with diadems of ice upon their brows. The pastures on the lower slopes stud the valley with gems of emerald. Nearing the summit we came upon the unmelted snows of winter, which were crusted sufficiently to support the horses. Here we found a company of men laboriously dragging telephone poles to the summit to repair the damage of the winter storms. At an elevation of 2,300 feet above the fiord we reached a flat moorland which slopes gently, at first, towards the east. We paused to bait the ponies and stretched ourselves at length on a mound of Arctic flowers and gazed across the valley to the *Vindheima Jökull;* Home of the Winds.

We followed a zigzag line of cairns down towards the valley of the *Fnjóská,* Touch-Wood-River. The view of this valley with the broad, swift river flowing in a long series of S-curves, the enormous mounds of volcanic ash fantastically sculptured by the wind, the little farm by the river where we refreshed ourselves with real cream and the forest of diminutive birch on the opposite bank of the river, these will never be forgotten. To one accustomed to seeing the joyous meadows of Iceland in undulating reaches of emerald green sprinkled with brilliant flowers, the tangled heaths of the uplands where roam uncounted sheep and half-wild ponies and the barren slopes of the foot hills of the volcanic ranges, as viewed from any descending trail,—this prospect is extremely pleasing. It must be remembered that there are no real forests in Iceland. Henderson, writing in 1817, says,—

"About a hundred years ago the valley exhibited one of the finest forests in Iceland, but now there is not a single tree to be seen,—such has been the havoc made by the inclemency of the seasons and the improvident conduct of the inhabitants. The remains of this forest are still visible on the east side of the river, which di-

vides the valley, in the numerous stumps of birch trees which present themselves, some of which exceed two feet in diameter."

That there were large forests in the ancient days we have plenty of evidence in the numerous references in the *Sagas*. In the thirty-sixth chapter of *Burnt Njál* we read:—

"There was a man named Swart, Bergthora's house-carle. Now Bergthora told him that he must go up into Redslip and hew wood; I will get men to draw home the wood."

There is further evidence that the wood was large enough so that it was hewn for ship-building and for houses. Since Henderson's day, the *Fnjóská* forest has sprouted and grown to a considerable size. The trees are four to eight feet high and mostly of birch. There are several of these birch forests in Iceland and the government not only protects them but provides a trained forester to study the local problems of forestation. Though not large enough for timber yet the birch has a definite value for the people. The branches and brush are used to lay between the layers of fuel while drying and the larger pieces are used to make plaiting on the roofs over which turf is laid. The tough birch also lends itself well to the making of rakes and other implements upon the farm.

Until quite recently the passage of the *Fnjóská* was most difficult and we were agreeably surprised to find a reinforced concrete bridge spanning the flood. What a task was its construction! The cement and steel had to be transported over the mountain by the ponies from *Akureyri* but a great mistake was made in its width. It is suitable for horseback crossing but will not permit the passage of even a two-wheel cart of short axle, such as is being introduced upon some of the farms. The building of these bridges is doing much to bring the

remote farms into closer relationship.

Crossing a waste of wind-driven sand and ashes we arrived at the parsonage of *Háls,* Ridge, a farm of great antiquity. For many centuries it has been the resting place for travellers across the mountains from *Akureyri* to the east. Even in *Saga* days, when farers from over the seas drew up their ships in the fiord for the winter and journeyed eastward for "guesting" they made use of this place for refreshment. We did not call as we hoped to reach another farm at the far end of the lake by evening.

The descent of the ridge into the upper end of the valley is pleasing because of the varied scenery. At the foot of the hill we crossed a bog and forded a small stream; the bog was difficult on account of recent rain and the ponies moved with greatest caution. When we reached solid ground we halted to graze the ponies and to examine the rich flora of the locality. As we mounted a party of Englishmen whirled by at a furious gallop. This gave us some concern as we knew that the farm towards which we were making our way had accommodations for only one party and it looked as if they intended to be the party. We learned later that they turned towards the north in search of a coal deposit, which it is needless to say they did not find.

Ljósavatnsskarð, Lake-of-Light-Pass, is a narrow valley, a watershed. The stream that tumbles down the gorge from the mountains divides into two arms, one flows eastward into the lake and the other westward into the *Fnjóská.* The ride down towards the lake is one continual crossing of small streams that rush down the snow gullies. From the pass to the margin of the lake we crossed, by actual count, fifty-three of these white streams during a ride of two hours.

Ljósavatn, Lake-of-Light, will ever remain one of the brightest memory pictures of Icelandic scenery.

The lake is long and narrow, the mountains descend abruptly on either side. The tumbling cascades, the many sheep upon the green ridges between the cataracts, the cattle grazing eye-deep in the lush grass along the shore, the numerous water fowl, where many a

"Stately drake, led forth his fleet upon the lake,"

the spectrum colors in the lava cliffs, the bands of cloud that hang perpetually over the narrow notch,—with clouds, colors, waterfalls and crags mirrored in the burnished surface,—formed a picture framed in the dark outlines of the mountains that caused us to dismount and for an hour held our close attention.

At evening we reached the *Djúpá,* Deep-River, well named. This stream has carved a gorge through a mass of old craters and heaps of volcanic ash. Under the influence of several days of continual sunshine the snows had been rapidly melting. We spent an hour in a fruitless search for a suitable ford and then drove the pack ponies into the torrent to swim across and composed ourselves for a good wetting in the icy water. We drew our knees above the necks of the ponies, seized the crupper strap with the left hand, turned the ponies up stream and made the crossing without serious mishap. A portion of the way the ponies were obliged to swim and the rapid current carried them far down stream. Thanks to the sagacity of the little fellows and to their perseverance, we escaped without getting wet, although our precarious position, balanced as we were on the top of the saddles, promised to topple us into the angry waters. The pack horses swam the stream with the packing cases partly submerged. Within an hour we were made comfortable in the tidy farmhouse at *Ljósavatn* and the contents of the cases were spread in the kitchen to dry. The house is large and comfortable and two beds were prepared for us upstairs,

an unusual condition as the guest room is usually on the ground floor. We had only one inconvenience,—the telephone is located in the guest chamber. Beside the house there is a small church where the farmers and their families assemble on Sunday, some of them from a considerable distance.

On the Sabbath all work ceases in Iceland, unless approaching rain makes it imperative that the cured hay be taken to the stacks. The people array themselves in their best attire and ride to church at a wild gallop, each on his favorite pony. The small children ride with their parents and the young people from the different farms so time their journey as to meet at the intersecting bridle paths and relate the news of the past week. On they ride, an ever increasing cavalcade, over moor and mountain ridge, across brook and farm till the parish has assembled at the church. The ponies are hobbled or turned into a compound and their riders have an hour for gossip before the service begins. The aged sit upon the grass and exchange snuff—a universal custom in Iceland,—and eagerly report the gossip that has filtered to the distant farms from the coast. The young meet in the church yard and many a pledge is here given that binds them together till the turf of the same yard receives beneath its floral decorations one of the faithful pair. The women hasten to the parsonage to don their best gown and arrange their braids and the silk tassel of the *húfa,* woman's cap. Finally arrives the pastor at the church, who greets all the people individually, arrays himself in his accustomed robes and then with the ringing of the bell the service begins. The sermon is generally read from manuscript, after which the Holy Communion is celebrated frequently followed by a christening. The service ended, the people usually assemble at a near-by house for coffee and further conversation after which the parties go their

several ways. The young men attempt to show the speed of their ponies in short spurts that would do credit to a western cow-boy, each trying to outstrip the other. The maidens follow demurely and the old people ride away last of all in a quiet manner. How well they know from experience that as soon as their sons are out of sight that they will rein down those galloping steeds and hold them until the maidens overtake them. Then Sigurð and Karin, side by side, will wend their leisurely way to Karin's home just like the young couples of other lands. The merry greetings and the cheerful partings at the church yard have ceased to fill the air and only the wind stirs the long grass upon the roof and sways the flowers upon the graves.

No pack trains come and go, no hay-laden ponies wind up from the meadows, no scythe rings with the stone,—the sounds of farm-life are hushed and the peace of the well-kept Sabbath rests upon these homes. Sunday evening calls are made and long ones they are, coffee is served with delicious cakes, the snuff horn circulates freely and in the compound the saddled ponies patiently await the coming of their masters for the wild ride over the moors to their own pastures.

I have witnessed many Sundays in Iceland and each one impressed me with the peace and happiness of its people, the devotion of worship and the value of the plain and simple life as a factor in contentment. To the young men who enquired about the customs of America and its advantages I had little to offer and my advice was to stay where the customs of centuries had ingrained habits of simplicity and instilled contentment. After all, what more do we wish in this world than contentment? Given enough to eat and to wear, protecting shelters, books and an occupation, the influence of right living and an absence of the craving for money and position, and man may be truely happy,—no matter under

what sky his tent is pitched. In *Reykjavik* with its sprinkling of foreign merchants and its few people who ape the customs of the continent in dress and in vice, yes and in idleness the mother of most of the vices, conditions are different. As in America, so in Iceland, the boy, who leaves the paternal roof and the occupation of his ancestors, who scorns the opportunities of the farm and seeks his fortune in the metropolis, soon puts aside his home-taught virtues, lapses into ways of idleness, acquires the idea that the world owes him the same living as that won by the ceaseless energy of toil, and it is not long before he becomes a derelict upon the ocean of humanity.

At breakfast we were treated for the first time in our Icelandic experience to the national dish of *skyr*, curdled milk. My first experience was not pleasant but I have since learned to relish it. It was necessary to eat a goodly portion of it in order not to offend the mistress who had taken considerable trouble to prepare it for us in the best fashion. *Skyr* has been a national dish from the earliest days of the *Vikings* but the method of its preparation has been kept secret. On our second return from Iceland we were accompanied by an Icelandic maid, who frequently prepared for our table Icelandic dishes, but we could never persuade her to prepare this dish nor to tell us how it was made. Another dish set before us was cheese made of sheep's milk; it was nearly chocolate in color and resembled mild roquefort in flavor. I needed no repeated trials to acquire a taste for this delicacy. It was set before us at every farm but it varied a good deal in quality. If one does not relish a rich, full-flavored cheese then the Icelandic cheese of sheeps' milk would not appeal to his taste.

The country around *Ljósavatn* is of considerable geological interest. The lake is of glacial origin and

around it are several small drumlins of ashes and rubble which are now being transformed into conglomerate. The lake has the form of the Scottish inland *lochs* and was formed by the filling in of one end of a glacial valley with glacial debris. Since the formation of the lake there has been a lava outflow across the east end of the valley and scores of small craters are along the banks of the *Djúpá*.

An hour's ride from the farm across the ancient lava bed brings the traveller to the bridge across the *Skjálfandafljót*, Trembling River, and to the *Goðafoss*, Falls-of-the-Gods, one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Iceland. It has not the grandeur of the *Gullfoss* and the *Dettifoss* but its symmetrical formation and the two even sheets of water that pour over its brink unbroken make it very attractive. In form it is like Niagara, and *like* Niagara has its rocky island near the middle. The eastern fall is about seven feet lower than the western, due to the lava formation over which the water flows. The falls are between twenty-five and thirty feet in height according to the melting of the snows. The rocky islet is split asunder and a solid stream of water pours through the cleft forming a central fall. The spray and mist from the falls are visible for many miles around and to one accustomed to look for hot springs, whenever mists are seen rising in a column from the plain, this water fall comes as a great surprise when one approaches the unexpected canyon.

All the country side is historic land and is frequently mentioned in the *Sagas*. When we left the river valley and climbed to the summit of the tableland and were skirting the great bog, we recalled that it was related in the *Saga* of *Hrafnkell, Frey's Priest*, how *Sámr* with three ponies rode from *Mývatn* across *Fljótsheiði*, River-Heath, to *Ljósavatn* Pass and on to the great fiord. We were taking the same journey but in the

opposite direction. The great heath on the upland is typical of the highland heaths of Iceland and may be briefly described in this connection.

It is a tongue of land some thirty miles long, reaching down from the inland plateau between two great river valleys. When the summit is gained it appears quite flat but a place where one would little expect to find extensive bogs and marshes, but such is the case. We followed the bog at its margin for nearly two hours in search of a place to cross and noted that patches of water glimmered here and there. Beautiful Arctic flowers fringed the margin of the pools, masses of *Eriophorum,* Cotton-Grass, spread their white sheets in the sun and the dwarf birch and Arctic willow tangled every foot of the way. Scores of ancient bridle trails cut into the ground so deeply that in places the ponies rubbed their sides against the turf in following them. Numerous sheep were scattered about the moorland singly and in groups of three to a dozen. Often a sheep would get into the trail and run in front of the ponies for half an hour bleating in a frightened manner. This custom of making a needless run until exhausted and driven far from their companions speaks strongly for the small intelligence of these domestic animals. The sheep run wild upon the mountain pastures and moors throughout the summer and are characteristic features of the landscape.

At the narrow neck of glacial moraine where we crossed the great bog we halted for an hour for lunch and to graze the ponies and shift the saddles. These out of door luncheons are real picnics. One turns up the lid of a packing case for a table, seats himself upon the grass and finds more enjoyment in the repast than at the best spread board in a fashionable hotel. The plover and whimbrel are always about to add their joyous cries to the calling of the curious sheep, the

ponies graze contentedly around the outer circle of the luncheon board and over all is the deep blue vault and showers of glorious sunshine. Those hours of rest and refreshment upon the heather and the enjoyment of the pipe! We were veritable Arabs, our steeds the thoroughbred Icelandic ponies and our oasis the patch of grass in the midst of a great lava desolation. There are no palm trees beside the water hole to complete the Oriental scene but a pillar of lava shelters one from the wind, or, if the day be sultry, one may crawl beneath a scrub of Arctic willow to ward off the sun and it is then, if the flies are present, that the pipe is a double comfort.

In the middle of the afternoon as we were descending a ridge into a gully with a boggy brook to cross we heard a shout from the top of the ridge, "Turn to the left, the crossing is better." Looking back we saw a party of several Icelanders galloping down the slope, led by a portly gentleman with a smiling countenance. We paused till he approached and were surprised to have him address us by name and add that he expected us to spend the night at his home. It was *Árni Jónsson* of *Skútustaðir,* Cave-Stead, the Dean of *Mývatn,* accompanied by his wife and three friends. They had just come from *Akureyri,* having stopped at the parsonage of *Háls* while we had been at *Ljósavatn.* From this moment until we reached his farm the ride was most enjoyable on account of the companionship of the Dean. Several years of his early life had been passed in North Dakota and he was well acquainted with the customs of the United States. He spoke English with fluency and had many questions to ask about America. We were glad to give him the information in return for the many questions we found necessary to ask him about Iceland and the customs of his people.

With sixteen ponies we made a merry showing as eight of us rode in single file at a full gallop over the undulating moor, now rising to the top of a ridge with a broad view of the country bordering the lake we were approaching, now descending into a gully rich in grass where we made the customary halt to rest the ponies. Towards evening we rode down to the *Kráká,* Crow-River, which we forded and soon afterwards arrived at the farm of the Dean. We were ushered into the sitting room, a separate room was provided for our luggage and we were given a large room over the *Thinghús* adjoining. The *Thinghús* in each *Syssel,* County, corresponds to the Court House in our Counties.

The children followed us about with some curiosity and were especially interested in our toilet preparations. They were excellently behaved and watched every chance to be of assistance. We enjoyed an excellent supper and that which made it especially agreeable was the fact that the Dean's wife dined with us. This is a rare occurence for strangers in Iceland. After supper we sat for a long time listening to the Dean's account of his people. He was very obliging and afforded us much information relative to the conditions of the church, Icelandic politics, woman suffrage and education.

Weary with the eight hours in the saddle, Mrs. Russell retired while I roamed about the farm till midnight, examining the strange lava formations. Midnight? Yes, but bright as day and under a cloudless sky. When one is interested in the north of Iceland, he does not know when to go to bed. At the end of my long ramble I expected to find Mrs. Russell asleep, on the contrary she was sitting up in bed admiring the needlework on the sheets and pillow cases. The upper sheet had a hand crocheted insertion in Icelandic, *Goða*

Nott, Sof ðu Rott, Good Night, Sleep Softly. One of the pillow slips was marked in the same fashion, *Goða Nott, Pabbi,* Good Night Papa. The other was marked, with the similar Icelandic expression for Good Night, Mamma. We admired the skillful needlework and the amount of time and patience necessary to complete this remarkable set and admitted that the Dean's wife possessed considerable skill, even among Icelandic women where the art of hand embroidery is far advanced. When we commented upon it, Mr. Jónsson, with a smile, called to him his little daughter of twelve and said,—

"This is the little lady who did that needle work. She did it while in the fields last summer and without our knowing anything about it. It was her Christmas present to father and mother."

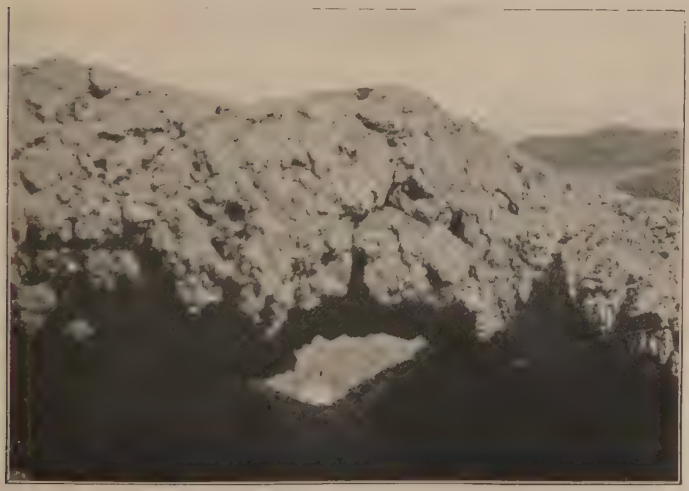
Several days later as we were packing the cases preparatory to our departure, this little girl approached and shyly presented to Mrs. Russell a package. Not knowing the contents it was accepted with the customary handshaking. When a chance moment offered it was slyly opened and lo! it was one of those pillow cases. We then protested against receiving so valuable a gift and one that had been devoted to a parent with a child's love at Christmas time. Mr. Jonsson assured us that his daughter was sincere in her wish that we should take it home to the United States and that she would be happy to make another to complete the set. This pillow case, covering a pillow of genuine eider down, has since held a place of honor in our guest room and we never see it without recalling the bright faces and the hearty hospitality of *Skútustaðir.*

At eight in the morning I awoke and was scarcely out of bed when the door opened and in came the maid, Kristine, with coffee, sugar, cream and cakes for our first meal. I tried to have her leave it outside the

door and motioned her away but it was of no use. In she came with the air of one who knew her duty to her master's guests and intended to fulfill it. She placed the tray on a stand, turned quickly to our clothes, gathered them up and was about to take them away when I protested as vigorously as I could with signs that they were necessary for my immediate use, but to no effect. I did succeed in pulling from her grasp my trousers but she fled smilingly with all the other items of wearing apparel even to the hats and riding boots. We were prisoners. After the coffee had been drunk the maid returned with the clothes nicely brushed and folded and the boots polished. Ever after this I slept with my trousers under my pillow and my extra pair of shoes hid in the room; otherwise I would have often been deprived of an hour of delightful strolling about the farm before the real breakfast.

The *Mývatn* region is the most fascinating, the most weird as well as the most beautiful place in all Iceland. I believe it to be the fairest spot in all that land of sun-kissed and wind-swept enchantment. The lake is twenty miles long and its deepest place is not over twelve feet. There are places where the water is hot and others where the water flows from under the lava in ice-cold streams into the lake. At the entrance of these streams there is excellent trout fishing. The lake is dotted with islands, each a small crater, each fringed to the edge of the water with the fragrant *Angelica*, each clothed with grass nearly to the summit and each summit black and red, scorched, blistered and horrent. Hundreds of these low craters fringe the southern end of the lake and are scattered over the adjoining farms, especially the farm of *Skútustaðir*. They are an exact representation of the mountains of the moon as viewed through a powerful telescope. To the geologist the *Mývatn* craters are of rare interest, for nowhere else

Fording a Shallow Arm of the Mývatn. Turf Cottage in the Distance.



Contorted, Twisted and Crumpled Lava at Skútustaðir.

on the earth are they duplicated in the numbers and in their peculiar formation. They rest like huge ant hills on a level plain, each is circular in form and many of them are confluent at the base. The slopes of many of the mounds are covered with bombs and of characteristic type. The character of the bombs on the slopes of widely separated craters is different, indicating a different period of eruption and a different composition of lava which entered into their formation.

One of the craters deserves a special description. It is shaped like an inverted funnel with the stem cut off at the apex of the funnel. Out of this orifice the lava was hurled in liquid drops to so great a height in the air that it cooled and the bombs returned to the crater and around it like a shower of grape-shot. It must have been a wonderful sight, the spraying of the upper air with liquid lava like water from a hose and to such an altitude that the stream broke into drops and every drop cooled before it returned to earth. A few of the bombs are fused together because they collided in a viscid condition. Others are flattened because the mass struck the earth before they had become rigid; but most of them are spherical and vary in size from tiny pellets to a croquet ball.

There are several *tintrons* around *Mývatn* and in the adjacent region of *Húsavik*. A tintron is a hornito, or more correctly speaking, a lava chimney. A hornito is a veritable lava oven from which issues smoke and fumes and it may be level or even sunk below the level of the general surface of the lava sheet; while a *tintron,* like a factory chimney with a spreading base, rises from the level ground to the height of many feet. It is evident from examination that they were formed by the spouting of lava in a liquid state so hot as to have lost its viscousness, and, like geyser-formations, that which fell upon the rim cooled and continual spoutings

built the *tintron.* We ascended one of the *tintrons* beside the lake and gazed down into its black depths. The outer surface at the base is clothed with grass while the *tintron* proper is encrusted with lichens. What a rugged and forbidding aspect is presented in the interior! Deep, deep down into the earth extends the flue, its wall hung with lava stalactites and patches of lava that solidified as the material dripped back into the interior after an explosion.

Of the scores of craters around *Mývatn* that I explored, only one contained water,—except those in the lake,—and this one is known as *Thangbrandspollr, Thangbrand's* Pool. *Thangbrand* was a Saxon Priest whom Olaf Tryggvason, King of Norway (995-1000 A. D.) sent to Iceland to perform a wholesale christening of the pagans. King *Olaf* forced Christianity upon his subjects at the point of the sword, killing and plundering all who refused to forsake the worship of *Thor* and *Odin* and take the christening. *Thangbrand* was chosen for the Icelandic mission because of his inhuman and zealous methods. He had, what he deserved, little success. We read that,—

*"Hall let himself be christened and all his household."

It was merely the act without any conversion from Scandinavian polytheism. Again we read,—

"Winterlid, the Scald, made a scurvy rime about him," *Thangbrand.* And again we find,—

**"*Thorvald,* the Guileful, and *Winterlid,* the Scald, made a scurvy rime about *Thangbrand,* but he slew them both. *Thangbrand* abode three winters in Iceland, and was the bane of three men or ever he departed thence."

It is reported in Iceland that this Pool is the place

Heimskringla, Vol. I, Chap. LXXX.
**Ibid.*

where *Thangbrand* christened his converts. Since it is authentic that he passed the time in Iceland at the home of *Hall,* which was in the southeast of Iceland, it is not likely that this is the real pool, although it is true that christenings took place in this pool at very early times. The Vikings did not take very kindly to the christening and the following facts will be of interest to those who dispute over the correct method of baptism. When the priests found that the Icelanders were the most stubborn of all the pagans of their experience about the rite of christening, the priests changed their tactics and performed their christenings in the warm pools adjacent to the hot springs. Their method of baptism in the eleventh century in Iceland may be inferred.

The Saga references show that the *Mývatn* region was an important place in the early days of colonization and in subsequent centuries and we reluctantly close the old annals so full of interest to the antiquarian and the historian, and turn again to a more general view of the *Mývatn* of the present. The view from *Skútustaðir* is remarkable and of great variety. In the foreground, the quiet lake, alive with water fowl and fringed with prosperous farms, presents a picture of pastoral peace and beauty; in the distance across the lake rise clouds of steam and sulfurous gases from the sizzling solfataras of *Námaskarð,* Sulfur-Pass; to the left rises the innocent looking peaks of *Krafla,* Creeping, and *Leirnúkr,* Mud-Peak, two famous volcanoes; to the right, the prominent feature in the landscape is *Hverfjall,* Hot-Spring-Mountain. *Hverfjall* is a large circular crater of the explosion type. It stands 700 feet above the level of the plain and is 4875 feet in diameter across the top. It is four miles in circumference at the summit of the rim. The interior is a mass of fragments and crushed rubble. There is a large mound in the

center composed of crumpled lava with angular edges. It is doubtful if lava ever flowed from this great crater, although there was said to have been an eruption in 1728. I found no evidence of such eruption, other than that of a violent upheaval of the crust due to internal explosions of a mighty character. A force beyond human comprehension or calculation thrust upwards this enormous mass and dropped the titanic fragments in the form of this circular wall 700 feet high here,—

> "Wide ruin spread the elements around,
> His havoc leagues on leagues you may descry."

The farm at *Skútustaðir* is one to which my thoughts often revert. I spent some time there in 1910 and was so charmed with the place and delighted with the Dean and his family that I returned to it for a more extended visit in 1913. The Dean has since moved to *Hólmar, Eskifjörðr. Skútustaðir* is a scene unmatched in Iceland, the lake, the sloping uplands clothed with excellent grass and sprinkled with a wealth of Arctic flowers, the flocks and herds in the succulent pastures, the farm buildings, *Thinghús* and church grouped on an eminence between two bodies of water and the grand panorama of meadows, rivers and volcanoes, with their ascending columns and clouds of steam,—a panorama that is well worth a summer and ten thousand miles of travel. On each of my visits the haying was in full swing. The men rose early to cut the grass in the dew and paused at midday for a long rest and a plunge in the lake while the raking, bundling and stacking continued well into the night. Numerous cocks of hay rose from the closely pared turf, many wild ducks led their young from one sheet of water to the other, crossing the yard between the buildings or pausing around the haycocks to pick the numer-

ous insects or venturing close to the doorways of the buildings for bits of food. Along the margin of the lake I found many of the swimming sandpipers, *Lobipes hyperboreus*, the *Northern Phalarope*. It is a beautiful bird and at *Mývatn* it is so tame that one may sit quietly on the bank and coax it up within a few feet of the shore where it will dart about picking up the insects thrown to it. I devoted an hour to studying this bird, feeding it in groups of several and in taking their photographs. What a shame it is that New England birds are not treated with the same thoughtfulness as the birds of Iceland! These birds were within a minute's walk of the house.

We strolled around the east side of the lake to the north shore and for three days made our headquarters at *Reykjahlíð*, Smoking-Pass, a remnant of a once prosperous farm which has been destroyed by the lava pouring from the vents of the foot hills that surround *Leirhnúkr*. English travellers of casual observation have stated that this great flood of lava came from the volcano itself but if they had taken the trouble to follow the streams of lava from the farm to their source, they would have found that a deep valley runs between these foothills and the real volcano of *Leirhnúkr*. This lava flowed during the years 1725, 1727, 1728 and 1729. *Leirhnúkr* was active at the same time, hence their error in attributing this sheet of lava to the volcano. The volcano has enough havoc to its discredit without charging it with the crime of ruining the fertile plains at the north end of the lake. In 1729 an extensive tract of grazing and mowing land of rare fertility was overflowed by molten rock. Some branches of the stream entered the lake and quenched their ardent fires, one branch flowed to the northeast corner of the church and was arrested in its flow within two feet of the building. Here the stream divided into two arms

and flowed around the edifice reuniting about sixty feet from the opposite corner, leaving the church entirely unharmed in the midst of the terrific heat of its fiery glow. Says Henderson, who mused at length over the incident,—

"Who knows but the effectual earnest prayer of some pious individual, or some designs of mercy, may have been the cause fixed in the eternal purpose of Jehovah for the preservation of this edifice?"

On this same farm, and at some distance from the margin of the lake, there is a deep rift in the plain, the descent into which is made with little difficulty. There is an abundance of water in the rift at a temperature of 90°F. The place is called *Stórigjá*, Large-Rift, and is a result of prehistoric earthquake action. The rift is very deep and extends up near to the hot mountain from whence issues the hot water. The water in the bed of the chasm is clear as crystal and reflects most beautifully the narrow streak of sky and the flower encrusted walls. Here the wild geranium and ferns grow abundantly, almost tropically, on the walls and in the clefts of the rocks. It was a novel experience to take a swim deep down in the crust of the earth in this hot water of emerald hue, to look up the chasm and see the towering ridges wreathed with rising steam and then to turn about and gaze towards the snow-capped peaks beyond the other end of the rift. The bath is invigorating and puts vigor and elasticity into the body to such a degree that it is noticeable for hours afterwards. It has been thought to be strongly radio-active.

No journey to *Reykjahlíð* would be complete without a visit to the small island of *Slútness*, one of the extinct craters in the lake. It is a paradise for ducks. Having obtained permission of the farmer at *Grimstaðir*, Grim's-Farm, who owns the island, we rowed out to the island accompanied by the farmer and *Ólafur*. Such

a place for ducks we had never seen; they breed in thousands on the small islands in the lake and in the retired creeks, but the island of *Slútness* is one great nest for ducks. The farmer told us that he had already taken over 13,000 eggs from the island that season, and had left sufficient for breeding purposes. These eggs are packed in water-glass for winter consumption. One may walk across the island in three minutes with ease and this makes the number of birds seem all the larger. During the nesting season it is not possible to step anywhere without taking precaution not to tread upon the birds. Here one may see the Golden Eyed Duck, *Clangula Islandica,* in all its glory, lift it from the nest for photographing and return it without any apparent disturbance to the bird. The eider duck, *Somateria Mollissima Dresseri,* is abundant on this island, though usually seeking the sea coast during the nesting season. The island itself, even if the birds were missing, is charming. It is circular in form, with the crater portion filled with water to the level of the lake. It is in this water that the ducklings take their first swimming exercises. In many places it was literally covered with the puffy brown balls that darted hither and yon amid the loud scolding of the numerous mothers in their efforts to keep the different families from getting inextricably mixed. Around the margin of the basin there is a remarkable plant society with numerous members, wonderful for this high latitude, above Lat. 65°-30′. The mountain ash and Arctic willow form dense thickets near the margin of the pool and close to the water the Angelica, *Angelica officinalis,* stands to a height of five feet and when crushed fills the air with the fragrance of its oil. This plant grows luxuriantly on many portions of the lake shore as well as on the islands and it is highly prized by the inhabitants. The list of plants which we collected here is too long to give

in full. There were over thirty specimens of flowering plants, among which we noticed the violets in dense mats, vigorous geraniums, *Geranium maculatum,* with larger and deeper colored blossoms than in New England, dandelions and arnica in great profusion, asters, marigolds and wild pinks. This island will yield a good deal of information to the botanist interested in *Ecology* and in the variation of species.

The house at *Reykjahlíð,* is an ancient one built of turf and stone with the usual turf roof, covered with grass in a flourishing condition. In front of the house is the only windmill that I have seen in Iceland. The sails are of galvanized iron and laid on the yards in squares like the glass in a window. The mill is a small affair and is used to grind barley and rye for the use of the family. No grain is raised in the country but it is all imported from Europe and ground as needed. The entrance to the house, like the one described in the chapter on *Hekla,* is through a hallway with an age-trodden floor. The guest room is finished in wood and we found it neat and clean. We are glad to report this state of cleanliness because the English writers tell strange tales about the uncleanliness of this house and its vermin-infested guest room. The people at the farm spoke no English but they waited upon us with the customary Icelandic cordiality and we thoroughly enjoyed the several meals prepared especially for our table. The trout came fresh from the lake and the prime eggs from ducks' nests on the islands.

One day I found a magnificent specimen of an edible mushroom, *Lycoperdon giganteum,* and to the horror of the people on the farm I requested that it be cooked. This specimen was ten inches in diameter, hard, white and in prime condition. It had been long since we had tasted mushrooms and our vegetable diet had been a sparing one since we left the steamer, so I persisted,

A Hot Water Fall at Hveravellir.

Slútness, Crater Island in the Mývatn. Home of the Golden Eyed Duck.

through Ólafur, that "the Americans really mean that they wish this mushroom cooked and they will eat it." Our directions were carefully followed and the *Lycoperdon* came to the table well prepared and in full flavor. What consternation it created in the kitchen we will never know, save that there was much talking there and uproarious laughter in that department during the cooking process. The maiden who brought it to the table came in with a blushing face and ill-concealed laughter at some remarks that followed as she left the kitchen. It certainly was delicious and after we had dipped deeply into the contents of the tureen, Ólafur was persuaded to try it and the farmer standing in the doorway looked aghast when he saw Ólafur eat it. Ólafur pronounced it good and invited the farmer to try it but the latter shook his head in a manner to convince us that he had no idea of being so unwise as to eat such a thing. On the following morning when I called for the remainder, the response was,—"it is all gone." Whether they threw it away or whether it was eaten after consultation with Ólafur I will never know for a certainty but I believe that it was eaten, also I believe that every sizable *Lycoperdon* growing on this farm in the future is destined for the stew pan with real cream.

We tarried at the farm for three days and during this time we had every possible attention paid to our comfort. The farmer always came to our room during meals and took coffee with us and smoked a cigar at the end. He always proffered his snuff horn to me but I was impolite enough to refuse this courtesy. Snuff taking is universal among the men. When two men meet upon the trail, whether they know each other or not, they salute, each brings out the snuff horn and the horns are exchanged. A little is then poured upon the back of the left wrist from which it is snuffed up the

right and then the left nostril. One or two violent sneezes follow, each man trying to sneeze the louder in compliment to the finer quality of the other's snuff, though it often happens that both horns were filled out of the same jar in the store. The sneezing over, they again shake hands, salute and ride their several ways.

CHAPTER XIV

KRAFLA

* * * "The mountain's head
Stupendous rose; crags, bare and bleachen, spread
In wild confusion,—fearful to the eye,—
In barren greatness, while the valleys lie
Crouching beneath, in their brown vesture clad,
And silent all."

—*Cottle.*

IN the early morning we mounted the best of our ponies for the toilsome ascent of *Krafla,* Creeping. We crossed the intervening ridge of mountains through the pass of *Námaskarð,* Solfatara-Pass, which is a deep defile in the volcanic range. At the base of this ridge there are spread out broad plains of multi-colored earth from which clouds of steam and sulfur gases ascend, which are visible for many miles across the lake. With caution we picked a way for the ponies amid the fumaroles and entered the pass. As far as the eye can range, this slope of the mountain is strewn with crystals of sulfur and gypsum interspersed with alum and needle zeolites in various forms. This slope is thinly crusted and perforated, like a skimmer, with orifices whence issue vile smelling gases to mingle with the steam and become dissipated in the upper air.

From the summit of the pass an extensive view of the *Mývatns Öraefa,* Desolate Lava of *Mývatn,* is obtained towards the northeast. It is a trackless ruin wrought by the combined labors of several volcanoes and contains no vegetation save patches of lichens that nourish a small herd of reindeer. At the foot of the slope upon which we halted a vast plain spreads out into the *Öraefa.* This plain is covered with a thin crust of chemical earths which rest upon a substratum of viscid, hot and sulfur-permeated clay. At the mar-

gin we left the ponies and ventured cautiously upon the crust, recalling the experience of Dr. Hooker in a similar situation at *Krisuvik,* where he nearly lost his life by sinking into the hot mass. The crust will support the curious traveller if he is sufficiently cautious in choosing his route by sounding the shell in front of him with a staff. It reminded me of an experience I had when a boy in watching my father cross a river upon thin ice, where he sounded the ice step by step in advance with the pole of his axe while I followed with great temerity over the cracking ice. As I expressed my fear of breaking through, he replied, "it will hold as long as it cracks." And so with the sulfur crust above the seething furies, "it will hold as long as it cracks." Woe to him who fails to sound this undulating crust before his advancing steps! All of this crust is composed of sublimated chemicals brought to the surface by the superheated gases. The crystals are various in form according to their chemical constituents and together they present a discordant color scheme, much like a painter's palette where the various color daubs have run together. As one crunches the crystals beneath his feet he has the sensation of walking with hob-nails through a jeweller's showcase.

This Arctic Phlegethon is mottled with pits of boiling bolus. There are four principal groups of these mud cauldrons, each in a basin of baked mud, elevated a few feet above the level of the plain. In 1910 one of these groups contained seven cauldrons, the largest being thirty feet in diameter. The cauldrons are not permanent but crust over from time to time and new ones form in the adjacent areas. The mud rises slowly in a gigantic bubble, like the sticky bubbles on the surface of hot molasses candy, until the gas pressure is sufficient to burst the film, when a cloud of gases suddenly shoots upward, a hot shower of mud is ejected

and then the entire mass slides back into the bowels of the earth with a horrid, sickening gasp. It is now safe to mount the rim and watch the mass as it slowly wells upwards for another display. Standing in a bath of vapors one looks backward over the track whence he came and notes tiny columns of steam marking the trail along which he so recently advanced. Every place in the crust that was punctured with the staff is slowly changing into a cauldron like the one at his feet and the traveller experiences a sensation of uneasiness, knowing, as he does, that in a brief time a new line of cauldrons will be in operation and for the first time he fully realizes the insecurity of his position and he longs for the solidity of the lava ridge where he left the hobbled ponies.

Because it suggests the food that may be provided for the guests of the Inferno, the Icelander has named the material within the smoking cauldrons "hell-broth" and the name can not be improved. They boil and splutter, spatter and emit abundant volumes of steam and make a great fuss over the little matter of a solid nature that is ejected. These spiteful explosions are worthy of greater results.

> "And still the smouldering flame lurks underground
> And tosses boiling fountains to the sky."

For two hours we wandered among the fumaroles and fountains of seething mud. Oftentimes the crust cracked viciously beneath our feet and we retreated precipitously to a thicker portion of the shell which covers this vast subterranean fire. It gave us much amusement to plug up the orifices of the small fumaroles with plastic clay and sulfur and to wait for them to burst forth spitefully and hurl out a shower of scorching mud.

Following a narrow sheep trail between the edge of

the lava and the high ridge that connects *Námarskarð* with *Leirnúkr* and *Krafla,* we arrived at a lonely spot, a deserted Icelandic farm with tumbled down buildings, which gave evidence of having been a prosperous stead before the lava flood spread its fiery wings over the valley. Here we paused for lunch. Among our steamer gifts was a package which was marked for us to open some day when we desired a change from our regular fare. We put it into our hamper that morning and rejoiced to find a bottle of delicious olives We washed down this lunch with acid water from the brook, which we later found to have its origin in one of the craters of *Krafla.* On our return from the summit, the ponies, who had had no water for several hours, went eagerly to this brook but after one taste they trotted along. Curious to know why they would not drink since they had freely done so in the morning, I dismounted and tasted the water. It had become much more acid and I could account for it only by supposing that a larger volume than usual had issued from the crater and that there had been less snow water for its dilution than when we had lunched.

The climb soon began in earnest. In a long series of zigzag curves we crossed ridge after ridge of sticky clay interspersed with volcanic ash and pumice. Having gained the summit of the ash ridges we photographed the distant peak of *Krafla,* traversed a bit of high moorland containing a small crater lake of blue water, entered a sheltered valley betwen the upper peak of *Krafla* and *Hrafntinnuhryggr,* Raven-Peaks-Back, a ridge of obsidian or Icelandic agate. Enormous masses of jet black obsidian of the purest form rise from this ridge and millions of these glass boulders are piled in a talus at the base of the cliffs. I secured an excellent specimen seven inches in diameter, pointed at one side and with a beautiful and double conchoidal

fracture for the science museum at Springfield, Mass.

We left the tired ponies to graze in the bit of grass while we made the final ascent of the mountain, which is far above the craters. The slope is steep and is clothed with a thick mat of birches to the very edge of the snow in the ravine. These birches are so small that an entire tree, roots, stem, leaves and catkin may be placed upon a five cent piece without projecting. We saw many tracks of reindeer and picked up a fine set of antlers of the last casting. The herd of these animals in the vicinity of *Krafla* is thriving as they are undisturbed by the natives.

On the very tip-top of the mountain we erected a cairn and deposited a record of our ascent in a metal cylinder. We then photographed the official flag of the Arctic Club of America and examined the broad and horrent country surrounding the base of this volcano. Before I went to Iceland my mountain climbing had been confined to the mountains of New Hampshire, where a magnificant, virgin forest clothes the middle and lower slopes. To stand upon any mountain in Iceland, with White Mountain impressions in the mind, and gaze at the barrenness of the surrounding country affords the greatest possible contrast.

The view from the summit of *Krafla* is imposing but not so extensive as from *Hekla*. Unlike *Hekla* the craters are on the slope and far below the summit. The top of *Krafla* is a jumbled mass of disintegrating *granophyre*. The view down the eastern slope and across the intervening space to *Leirnúkr* is plutonic and exceedingly wild. In the distance a mass of lava hangs upon the side of *Leirnúkr* like a petrified waterfall, nearer and on the middle slopes of *Krafla* are several old craters filled with water from which columns of steam continually ascend. One of them is a double crater with confluent edges. It is filled with water

which boils violently along the side next to the summit of the mountain. The craters are at an elevation of 1700 feet above sea level and in the days when Henderson visited them they were in a violent state of action. On July 15, 1910, we found them provokingly quiet. At some distance down the mountain below the crater lakes there is a great rift cutting deeply into the side of the mountain. Here we found considerable activity. The cleft was so filled with clouds of steam that my photograph of it reveals little except the belching vapors. If I had had a phonograph I could have brought home a record of growling, roaring, impatient muttering that burst into explosive thunders that would have been of scientific interest at least if not to the popular ear. The odors of sulfur gases were sufficiently strong to stifle any one except a chemist accustomed to the fragrance of the laboratory. If I had had an instrument to record odors I could have brought away a collection of these simple and multiple combinations of smells that would have startled the dullest of olefactory nerves. The name of this rift in Icelandic is *Víti,* signifying *Hell,* well named.

Krafla is not dead, merely sleeping. In the past centuries it has wrought great havoc. The eruption of May 17, 1724, was so violent that the ashes and pumice on the eastern shore of *Mývatn* were deposited to a depth of over three feet. The connection between *Krafla* and *Leirnúkr* is close, in reality they are one volcano with different craters. *Leirnúkr* had a violent eruption in 1725, to which reference was made in the preceding chapter, and during the following four years there were three more eruptions that did great damage.

The extended view from *Krafla* is desolate and dreary in the extreme. When the eye ranges beyond the smoking slopes of mighty *Krafla* it meets the greatest lava desolation in the north of Iceland. In the distance

flashes of the *Jökulsá,* Ice-Mountain-River, are seen as it labors through the twisted lava to plunge into the abyss of the *Dettifoss.* The southern view commands the low volcanoes surrounding *Mývatn.* To the left rises the obsidian mountain and at our very feet ascend the roaring columns out of *Víti* to their dissipation in the upper air.

Descending to our ponies we decided to traverse the unexplored portion of the mountain by a spiral route. We soon became entangled in an intricate mesh of deep, soft gullies. The great depth of these gullies, the ridges of dry ashes that surmounted them, the steep, viscid slopes and the beds filled with running water hot and odorous, wherein a peculiar alga thrives, and the intervening reaches of slumpy snow afforded us two hours of very laborious work. Cautiously we proceeded, leading the ponies, searching for places to descend the slopes and then working much harder to get out of the ravine, only to find it necessary to repeat the performance many times. The trusting beasts followed our ignominious slides into the gulches and after much coaxing managed to scramble up after us into the dry ashes at the top. We photographed these gullies, descended to the sheep trail and after three and one half hours of hard riding returned to our comfortable quarters at *Reykjalíð* farm, where we did ample justice to the supper which the farmer's daughter had prepared for us. On the menu was an excellent item that was new to us, a sweet purple soup.

The minerals and lava specimens that I had collected up to this time were packed and left with the farmer who engaged for a *kroner* to transport them to *Húsavik* when he went to this trading station in the autumn. In due course of time the box, which I had left to his care, arrived safely in Springfield,—another instance of the faithfulness of the Icelander in keeping

his word. The reader will note the difference in the cost of packing a box of seventy-five pounds on the back of a pony for two days and the tariff of the Express Companies of America.

On the morrow we rode through the lava beds that fringe the eastern shore of *Mývatn* just after a clearing shower and the sunlight upon the crater islands, the lichen-encrusted lava ridges and the play of light upon the water of the land-locked pools was of surprising beauty. As we neared *Kálfstrond,* Calf-Strand, an Icelandic shepherd dog ran out to meet us and gave a noisy welcome. For the size of the dog the Iceland variety has the strongest lungs of any member of the canine family. They will run for half a mile to meet the traveller yelping and crying and will often follow him for miles after leaving the farm. One of these fluffy balls of animation stayed with us for several days and resisted all our efforts to leave him behind. We left him in a stable with instructions to keep him till some one returned to the farm from whence he had run away but at noon as we were fording a river he joyously arrived. The cold stream was no obstacle, he was the first on the opposite shore and stayed with us until we arrived at *Reykjavik.* He lost no opportunity to get into our room at the hotel, invariably found us if we went for a walk and when we pushed from the landing in a small boat to go out into the stream to board our steamer for home, he jumped from the wharf into the boat and stuck to us till we ascended the gang plank and as the boat pulled ashore he gave one long and mournful cry. My heart has often turned towards the faithfulness and the attachment of this little fellow and often do I wonder if he is following the sheep over his native hills forgetful of the summer's escapade when he ran away to associate with strangers.

Beneath the lava ridges great streams of water from the neighboring mountains pour into the lake and around these inlets there is always excellent trout fishing. The trout are large and abundant. Between the lake and *Hverfjall* the lava is rifted into deep ravines and mighty cliffs which, in their castellated and architectural forms, coated with lichens, present more the appearance of being the handiwork of man than that of subterranean powers assisted by the frosts of time. Little imagination is necessary to view in this mass of plutonic rock the Gothic arches of a long deserted cloister, and in that pile of ragged crust, the ramparts and bastions of a mediaeval fortress. Lofty piles stand side by side upon the plain suggestive of triumphal arches whose capstone has fallen to the ground.

On arriving at *Skútustaðir* we found that Baron Klinckowström, his son Harald and Walter Friedeberg, whom we had met on the *Botnia,* had arrived and established themselves in the *Thinghús.* Here they were busy in preparing bird skins for museums in Stockholm, Berlin, and the private collection of Harald. It was a pleasure to see a youth like Harald cling for hours to the trying labor of preparing bird skins. Later I examined his large and excellent collection of mounted birds at his father's castle at Stafsund near Stockholm and I could not help admiring the energy and perseverance of the youth as well as the skill manifest in mounting this collection, all of which was the work of his unaided hands. The boy with a purpose, who lives largely in the open, even though he may be deprived of the university, is sure to obtain a most liberal education, an education that comes through the eye and is augmented by thought. Later, when I had had a chance to study the daily life of a boy in the public schools of Sweden and draw a comparison with that of an American youth, I understood how that lit-

tle country of mountains and lakes had produced so many remarkable men, such as Berzelius, Linnaeus, Bergman, Scheele and Arrhenius. It is the spirit that dominates the boy in successful education, not the special advantages of his equipment.

We had planned to leave *Skútustaðir* at eight in the morning but it was one in the afternoon when we parted from our genial host. His little daughter opened the *tún* gate and we rode out upon the great heath which reaches from *Mývatn* to *Ljósavatn*. The great delay was caused by the straying of the ponies. A week before I had swapped a pony with the farmer at *Ljósavatn*. The pony had taken it into his wise little head to return to his old home without the trouble of carrying his pack and he was followed by three of our riding ponies. It was several hours before *Ólafur* overtook them and returned to the lake. The innumerable midges around the lake greatly annoy the ponies and often cause them to wander. Sometimes they are so violently attacked by swarms of these insects that they will rush headlong into the water to rid themselves of their tormentors. When the grass is good and the wind and midges do not annoy, they do not wander but graze quietly during the night and are easily captured when wanted. A child with a string will go to the grazing land, fasten it around the lower jaw of one of the ponies, mount and drive the troup to the farm house to be saddled. It is never necessary, as it often is in New England, to spend an hour to coax a horse with a measure of grain. The Icelandic horse is a type peculiar to the country. He is the descendant of the Scandinavian steed taken to that country centuries since by the early settlers. He has become thoroughly inured to the conditions and has developed characteristics not found in any other breed of horses. His weight is from 500 to 600 pounds, though some run a little heavier. The

Flag of the Arctic Club of America on the Summit of Krafla.

Obsidian Ridge, Hrafntinnuhryggr, near Summit of Krafla.

mane is very thick and long; the tail is a great brush about ten inches in diameter and unless clipped drags upon the ground. In the driving wind, rain or sleet, the pony turns his tail to the storm and with lowered head, if untethered, walks out the gale. The wind spreads the thick hair over his hips and even though matted upon the surface with sleet it becomes an admirable protection. The hair of the tail is very long and is used by the farmers for making ropes to bind hay. The horses are well built, usually fat, free from blemishes, slender in the legs, wide between the eyes, broad backed and deep chested. Their sagacity is remarkable. In fording rivers, in crossing the ragged lava, in picking their way over stone-strewn heaths, across quaking bogs, or in the rugged defiles or on the precipitous slopes of the trailless mountains, they are the wisest, kindest, surest and the finest saddle horses.

The endurance of these little steeds is a continual surprise to the stranger. In the bogs and in rubble riding they are extremely cautious and if they are allowed to negotiate the difficult places in their own way, will never bring the rider to grief. I said they were sure footed and the fact that I have been thrown a few times is not contrary to the statement. When a pony is ridden at an eight mile pace down a declivity thickly strewn with loose stones, if he stumbles three times a month it should not be attributed to the pony as a fault but rather to the recklessness of his rider. Their living is obtained entirely out of doors. In the spring the young horses are driven into the mountains where they run wild until late in the autumn when they are taken to the farm for the winter. It is only occasionally during the most severe portion of the winter that they are provided with hay and never with grain, except work-horses in the city. When four years old they are broken to the saddle. There are about 50,000 ponies

in the country and hundreds are exported to Denmark and Scotland yearly. The steamer upon which we returned from Iceland the first summer carried 376 ponies. The saddle ponies have different steps, some amble, some trot, some gallop, some pace,—all have at least two of these methods while some of them have all of these methods and a good rider can take his choice or have his pony change from one to another.

A troup of ponies on a journey will usually stay together. Although we frequently passed through mountain pastures where scores of horses were grazing, we never knew one of our ponies to leave the company of his own companions. On arrival at a farm the ponies are led with a string, for the Icelander is jealous of every blade of grass within his enclosure and it is a mark of discourtesy to permit the ponies to graze about the buildings. The best ponies are raised in the rich valleys of the north rivers and it is there that the Icelandic gentleman goes for his fancy saddle horse, as the Yankee formerly went to Kentucky.

The straying of the ponies is not the only cause of a late departure in the morning. The Icelander is never in a hurry. Every night we held a solemn council with the guide and it was usually agreed that we would leave at nine in the morning, sometimes the time set was eight. But, if the ponies had not strayed then it was found that several of them must be shod; if they did not need shoeing the saddles needed attention; if the saddles were in good condition then the morning coffee was late, so that we usually started two hours after the appointed time.

The best advice to a prospective Yankee in Iceland is,—Do not fret. Go and take photographs while the ponies are being saddled. When they are saddled go and take some more. When everything is ready, start. To the nervous and rushing American this is an un-

usual procedure. But, the charm of Icelandic travel is the abundance of time, freedom from any real cause for worry and the knowledge that darkness can not overtake the summer traveller, no matter where or when he travels. There is also the certainty that he will receive a cordial reception, no matter when he arrives. Impatient Americans need a summer on horseback in Iceland to curb their impetuosity.

One day we had a pleasant experience in calling at a farm house where lived friends of our guide. We were invited into the guest room which contained a narrow bed, a big round table and an organ made in Brattleboro, Vt. Our host produced the usual horn of snuff and with it some excellent cigars. He then played and sang to us in Icelandic,—"There's a Land that is Fairer than Day." He wished us to photograph his children but their mother first insisted in putting them through the hair-combing process. After this they were lined up in front of the house, seven in a row. After repeated efforts on the part of the older ones to keep the hands of their baby brother out of his mouth the picture was taken with success. The mother disappeared for half an hour and then returned with coffee and freshly made pancakes rolled in sugar.

The host and hostess then showed us all over their house, a turf structure and typical of the older houses in the country. Such farm houses contain narrow, windowless corridors, winding in labyrinthian maze from room to room. In this house one passageway led to a large open mound where a fire is made to smoke fish and meat and incidentally the whole house and everything in it. Another passage leads to the real kitchen with an iron stove. The walls are all of turf as are the partitions and the roof, with just enough driftwood in the roof to make a framework to hold the turf in place. Steep stairs lead to the *baðstofa,* sleeping apartment, which

frequently forms the sleeping and sitting room and the common work room of the entire family, especially in winter. Bunks built into the wall extend around the room and are frequently filled with seaweed or feathers over which is spread a fold or two of wadmal and a thick coverlet of eider down. The floor of the *bað stofa* is of boards but the floors down stairs are frequently of hard earth which frequently becomes damp. From the ceiling are suspended numerous articles of domestic economy while large chests, ornately carved, containing clothing and valuables are scattered through the house.

On another occasion at midnight after Mrs. Russell and I had retired, the hostess came into the guest room and asked us if we would like to go up into the *bað stofa* and see the family in bed. We promptly accepted the invitation and ascending the ladder found the family abed, head to foot, separated by the boards previously described, family and farm hands, men and women, children, young men and maidens, each asleep and unconscious of our intrusion. This has been the custom of centuries. There are no partitions, no draperies, and there is no false modesty, no resulting immorality. The marriage vow is seldom anticipated and I firmly believe the degree of morality is higher in this land than in any other.

CHAPTER XV

VATNSDALR

"Day long they fared through the mountains, and that highway's fashioner
Forsooth was a fearful craftsman, and his hands the waters were,
And the heaped-up ice was his mattock, and the fire-blast was his man."

—*Morris.*

DURING the summer day Akureyri is a busy place. It is the emporium of the north, the resort of the fishermen from the northern waters and the place where the farmers of the north of Iceland exchange their produce for European supplies. The city is comfortably situated at the head of the longest fiord in Iceland. There is one street that runs between the water and the high hill towards the west. The population is about 1,500. There are several shops and good stores, a public library. Two newspapers are published in the city. There is a high school and an agricultural college. One baker in the city is also a photographer and there one may purchase a photograph or a cruller over the same counter.

At the upper end of the street there is a commodious and well constructed church. Several of the front yards boast fine clumps of mountain ash; one of these tree clumps is the pride of the city, as it has attained a considerable growth, a remarkable size for this exposure and high latitude. Behind the street on the steep hillside, patches of potatoes and turnips checker the entire bank of the fiord for a mile or more. It is a pleasing picture when contrasted with the grimness of the ice-covered ridges beyond.

There is a spacious hotel, long kept by an eccentric

Dane by the name of Jensen. It has recently changed hands. I have often heard it stated that he had no regular scale of prices but charged his guests according to his likes or dislikes. If the guest was winning, the genial Dane reduced the charge; but if the guest had been disagreeable, or in any way did not appeal to the fancy of the proprietor, then the price was raised. Whatever the truth of the report may be, one thing is certain, the host was genial, kept a good house, cared for his guests, and the prices, according to my experience, were reasonable. It is possible that his philosophy was correct, that the guest who makes unnecessary demands or is difficult to please should be the one to pay the extras, while the guest who takes what is provided, makes no special demands, considers the local conditions which obtain and demands no special service for himself at the expense of other guests, should be favored in the reckoning. I think Jensen's method is correct. How he regarded us I do not know; suffice it to state that we had a good room with two beds and excellent food in a private dining room with the best of attention and that our bill for twenty-four hours was only the equivalent of two dollars for both of us.

There was one exception to our comfort at this hostelry, but this can not be charged to the eccentricity of the landlord. My bed seemed comfortable when I retired, but long before I went to sleep I found a hard bunch in the mattress that persisted in getting between my shoulders no matter how I twisted and turned. It was a narrow bed and afforded me no retreat from the offending bunch. I rose, stripped the bed, instituted a search and finally ripped open the mattress at the corner, worked that lump to the slit and pulled out a rooster's head with the longest bill that was ever presented to me in Iceland. It had been pecking my shoulders persistently in spite of the fact that this

rooster had fought his last fight many years since. If I had damaged the cover a little, I reasoned that I had avenged the sleeplessness of many a former occupant of this couch and was rendering a good service to future guests.

Akureyri is the home of the venerable poet, *Matthias Jöckumsson,* born in 1833, a lyric poet of the highest rank, who has also written excellent drama. It was our pleasure one day while fording the *Heraðsvötn,* District-Waters, to meet him. Riding off the little ferry he came to us with hat in hand and his white locks flowing in the wind. Holding out his right hand to us he said,—

"Welcome, strangers, to Iceland!"

At the far end of the city, in fact a continuation of the one street, is *Oddeyri,* Point of Land, under a different political jurisdiction from *Akureyri.* It is a busy place in the whaling and herring season and contains a large store operated by the Danish-Icelandic Trading Company. It has two banks and has recently become the center of the shipping interests by reason of its new wharf which enables steamers to discharge cargo without the use of lighters. The curing and rendering establishments in this town will repay a visit, unless one has strong olefactory objections. When the wind blows up the fiord there is no doubt as to the use to which the buildings on the extreme point of land north of the pier are put.

Leaving *Akureyri* we followed the west bank of the grand *Eyjarfjörðr* till we arrived at the *Hörgá,* Howe-River, whence we looked across the level meadows to the former location of the Agricultural College at *Möðruvellir,* Madder-Valley. The college is now located at *Akureyri.* It is sometimes a surprise to learn that there is such a college close to the Arctic Circle, but it has a good reason for its existence. There is need

for training the farmers in methods of cattle, horse and sheep breeding, especially the latter, that they may win the best possible success in their struggle with adverse conditions. Jón Hjaltalin at one time was the head master of this school and he also did service in Edinburgh, Scotland, as a librarian.

The view across the valley is extensive and charming because the rugged and ragged features of the usual Icelandic landscape are softened by the river winding through the undulating meadows which roll upwards to the distance-softened ridges, while yet beyond, the crumbling cinder cones melt into the whiteness of the lofty *Vindheima Jökull,* Wind-Home-Glacier, and flashing in the sun,—

"A thousand rills
Come leaping from the mountain, each a fay,
Sweet singing then;
'O come with us out seaward, come away!' "

We stopped for lunch beside a singing brook flowing down from the ridge on our left and springing into the *Hörgá.* The grass was in excellent condition and the ponies grazed as if they had knowledge of the poor quality of this necessity and its scarcity during the following days. The cotton grass spread its sheets of pearly white around us, forget-me-nots and marguerites, the wild arnica and the violets reveled in the glory of their bloom. We ate our lunch and reclined upon the grass in full enjoyment of the scene and recalled the former importance of this valley. It is as beautiful today as when the Vikings first entered it. Since their time no blasting volcano with fiery breath has scorched its foliage nor poured its glinting lava in destructive streams over the meadows and humble homes. The days of feudal strife passed with the Christian education of that sturdy race and the peace of

the Cross now rests upon the valley like the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The time of its literary importance passed with the decline of its Abbey and the passing of Sira Jón Thorlakson, the Icelandic Milton. Across the river, and shaded by a noble clump of the mountain ash, stands the home of this venerable poet and priest, *Baegisá*. A century ago he translated Paradise Lost, Pope's Essay on Man, portions of Shakespeare, masterpieces of German and Scandinavian literature into the Icelandic. Besides being a translator, he composed a large amount of Icelandic poetry in the *Eddic* phraseology which competent judges say equalled and often surpassed the masterpieces of the ancient scalds. He was sorely fettered by poverty. When commenting upon the high morality of his race and the great freedom from the use of intoxicants by his people at that time he said,—

"Our poverty is the bulwark of our happiness."

Again, speaking of poverty, the common lot of most poets of all lands, and in all ages, he says, literally from one of his poems,—

"Ever since I came into this world, I have been wedded to poverty, who has hugged me to her bosom these seventy winters all but two; whether we shall ever be divorced here below, is only known to Him who joined us together."

From our vantage point we looked down upon three beautiful valleys with as many rivers joining to form the valley of the *Hörgá* and its mighty stream. These are the *Hörgárdalr, Öxnadalr* and *Baegisádalr*. The mountains rise to an elevation 4000 feet above the valley, capped with snow or perpetual ice, their slopes slashed into wild ravines and terraced with lava cliffs down which course numerous cascades from the melting snows. It is a fair and peaceful scene, this at our feet: it is a grand and awesome sight, that greets

the lifted eye.

Fastening forget-me-nots into the manes of the ponies we resumed our ride up the valley and turned into the *Öxnadalr,* Ox-Valley. It is a fine illustration of a glacial valley. The cross section is nearly a semi-circle and the sides are deeply grooved; the glacial carving is much more pronounced than that of the lower end of *Seyðisfjörðr.* We stopped over night at *Thverá,* Tributary-River, in a humble home perched upon the steep hillside above the river and just below the ice cliffs.

Across the river rise the *Hraundrangar,* Lava Pillars, which tower in a long chain of spires above the castellated ridge, a prominent feature in the landscape for miles up and down the valley. High up between the ridges there is a sheet of water which pours out through a small rift in the nearer ridge and falls into the valley as if some Moses had smitten the lava wall with his rod of wrath.

We enjoyed our stay at *Thverá* and experienced several things of interest. It is an ancient farm located on the trail through the defile where Icelanders have passed between the east and west for a thousand years. A newly wedded couple had just taken up their abode under the paternal roof in this historic spot and were beginning the problems of life where generations of their ancestors had solved the same enigmas with the variations which the succeeding centuries have added. They were attentive to our necessities with the inborn hospitality of the race but there was something in the atmosphere that revealed the newness of the work and the shyness of the wedded couple added much to our amusement.

During the week the rapidly melting snows had carried away the bridge over the *Thverá* and we found it necessary to cross the torrent on a stringer. With

Thverá, a Highland Home in the Öxnadalr.

Vatnsdalshólar, Numberless Conical Hills in Vatnsdalr.

a little coaxing all the ponies walked across except our faithful black pack pony. Vexed at the delay in removing his packing boxes, and anxious to be with his companions grazing on the opposite bank, he ran rapidly up and down the stream, repeatedly trying the river for a place to ford with his load which was still fastened to the saddle. Ólafur was on the opposite side resaddling the other ponies. Old Black became frantic, shook himself repeatedly, ran sideways into a projecting rock in the canyon and freed himself from his load; he then ran to the stringer, crossed and grazed contentedly with his mates and in positive forgetfulness of the wreckage he had left strewn upon the opposite shore. The cases had burst open and their contents were scattered along the sides of the river and some of the items were actually rescued with difficulty from the running water. Fortunately Old Black was not carrying my photograph outfit that morning as was his usual custom. Again in 1913 in my crossing of the interior of Iceland I had this same horse and of all the pack ponies which I have used during my four different journeys I have never found one equal in value to this one. His peculiar trait was to pick a trail for himself and his intelligence in this work was noteworthy. He was always given the most valuable portion of my load and whether in the bogs, on the rough mountains where there were no trails or in the fording of difficult rivers he was always worthy of the trust I imposed in him. The one accident mentioned above is the only one he has had in his long years of service as a pack pony.

Clumps of mountain ash, in Europe called *rowan* tree, here and there adorn a sheltered spot and their association with the angular lava recalled to my mind the *Lay of Geirod,* a kind of parable concerning the fires of Iceland. Greatly abridged it runs as follows:—

"*Loki,* the beguiler, flew away one day in quest of adventures in *Frigga's* falcon dress. He flew to a huge castle over the sea and alighted on a great castle and looked into the hall. *Geirod* saw him and ordered him to be caught. The slave climbed the wall with difficulty and *Loki* laughed to see the labor the man made. He resolved not to fly till the slave had nearly caught him. He waited too long, as he spread his wings to mount to the next height and lead on his pursuer, the slave caught him by the feet and took him to *Geirod,* the giant, who, when he looked at him believed him to be a human and not a real bird. He bade him answer but *Loki* was silent. *Loki* could only regain his liberty by promising the giant that he would lure *Asa Thor* to this fastness without his hammer. *Geirod* was sure he could destroy *Thor* if he could meet him without *Thor* having his wonderful hammer. *Loki* beguiled *Thor* to visit *Geirod* without his hammer; but a friendly giantess, *Grida,* Grace, in whose house *Thor* lodged, knowing the plot of *Loki* and *Geirod,* loaned *Thor* her staff and iron gauntlets."

"*Thor* discovered the plot and in trying to escape waded the sea, whereupon *Gjálf,* (din or roar of ocean), *Geirod's* daughter, flung the waves at *Thor. Thor* cast a rock at *Gjálf* and he never missed when he cast a stone, and thus with stone hurling and with the aid of his staff and gauntlets he reached the land. He caught hold of a friendly 'rowan' and climbed out of the water."

Beause of this myth the mountain ash has ever since been sacred to *Thor.*

Again we read:—

"When *Thor* had won his way into the fire castle," (this doubtless refers to the fiery lava chambers which occur in many parts of Iceland), "he was invited to take a seat. No sooner had he done so than the seat

flew to the roof of the hall, where *Thor* would have been crushed had he not pushed back with his staff which the giantess had given him. He pressed back so effectively that he slew the two water-storm daughters of *Geirod,* who had tried to blow him into the heavens."

In this parable the reference is undoubtedly to the *Geysir. Thor's* next foe was a volcano.

"*Geirod* now challenged *Thor* to fight in the hall lined with fire. *Thor* caught the red hot weapons in his iron gloves and hurled them back to *Geirod,* who vanily crouched beside a pillar to defend himself. But *Thor* crushed this *Demon* of *Underground Fire* back into the black rock and flung the fire caverns wide open to the day."

Such is the ancient legend but it shows how legends are founded upon facts or conditions, which may be lost for centuries, though the legends may remain for us to scoff at when we do not know the foundation. In this instance we see the forces of water and fire contending with humans, a never ending contest between the forces of destruction and the powers of reason and intelligence.

At the head of the *Öxnadalr* we stopped at the post shelter for coffee and cakes and tinned tongue. The poor little farm is not worthy of the name of a farm. It is just a bit of mountain herbage at the borders of the snows and screes and the one family could not survive were is not for the assistance of the government in order that a shelter for the post carriers and chance travellers against the mountain storms may be provided.

I swapped a pony with the farmer and paid him a margin of two dollars. The horse I traded was the same that I had received in a similar trade at *Ljósavatn.* The farmer carefully examined the marks in the ears

of the pony and stated that it was raised on this same farm and had now got home. While I am not a horse trader and know none of the intricacies of the game and had no way to learn the Icelandic methods, the satisfaction I got from this pony convinced me that the best of the bargain was mine. While the Icelander is noted for his square dealing and truthfulness I had often wondered what he would be like in a horse trade. The pony I traded had a quarter crack and I told Ólafur to point this out to the farmer. Ólafur shook his head and said,—

"He can see it as well as you."

Later I asked Ólafur about this and enquired how he could reconcile it with the proverbial integrity of his people. He replied,—

"But this was a horse trade and every man must see what he is buying when he purchases a horse."

In connection with this there was another incident of sharpness that came to my attention in the summer of 1913, though it may have been done more from the love of a joke than from any intention to defraud. The Icelander is very fond of a joke, especially when at the expense of some one else. The steamship company trading around the coast advertises "to return *empties* free of charge." A farmer in *Borg* sold a cow to a man in *Reykjavik* with the understanding that the skin was to be returned to him. The man in *Reykjavik* tied up the skin and shipped it to the farmer in *Borg*. The steamship company charged the farmer for carrying the bundle. The farmer replied,—

"But there is no charge. You took the cow to Rekyjavik and you offer to return 'empties free of charge' and if a cow skin is not an *empty,* what is it?"

Up and up we climbed to an elevation of about 2,000 feet to the height of land, the watershed between *Skagafjörðr,* Cape-Fiord, and *Eyjafjörðr.* The ride

down the valley towards the west is wild in the extreme. The trail passes through a long mountain pasture where we encountered about one hundred young ponies, thence along the edge of a chasm so deep that the tumbling of the water in the bed came up to us only as a murmur. On our right rose impassable cliffs and rubble screes and it was along this talus of rolling material, composed of disintegrating lava and sand, that we made our way. There are places where a false step or a small avalanche would sweep horse and rider into the depths of the chasm. When the canyon widened, the green-white of the water flashed up to us like masses of liquid emerald. The trail improved as we descended and the declivity became less precipitous; having a long distance ahead of us we gave the ponies a free bit and away we went in a joyful gallop down the grade. We had been discussing the prospects of a tumble a few moments before when on the edge of the cliff but now all fear had vanished. My pony stumbled on some small stones and I shot over his head much to the amusement of my companion. Mrs. Russell was following at this point. Scarcely had I regained my seat in the saddle and reined in to the rear when her pony stumbled and threw her in a similar manner. She was not hurt. This was my second and her first tumble during the two summers of riding, so she held up two fingers to me from time to time. She was laughing at my poor horsemanship and I pushed on to the head of the train. A great raven perched on a lava point was croaking excitedly and it seemed to me that he said, "saw-you, saw-you, saw-you!" Turning to look at this fine black bird I saw my brave companion trying to remount from a second tumble without letting me know of it. She never forgave that raven, for if he had not notified me of the mishap she might still have held those two mocking fingers at me.

Rapidly we descended to the lower valley and forded the rapid river. Ravine after ravine opened into the valley, each bringing its turbulent stream to swell the great river far below the trail. We lingered here and there to examine the rocks and I was surprised at the outcroppings of copper in the form of copper carbonate. Zeolites of great beauty are imbedded in the lava and I have often longed for a day or two to explore some of those ravines that lead from this pass. There are indications of considerable copper in two places in Iceland and since Iceland has unlimited water power for the electrical treatment of ore some one will soon ascertain the quantity of copper present.

As the valley became wider it turned towards the northwest and we caught glimpses of tiny homes on the opposite side of the river. Desolate homes are these among the mountains, far away from neighbors. The farmers eke out a bare living with the produce of their sheep. Down came the wind in mighty gusts bringing rain and mists that shut out all distances. The winds came directly from the ice sheets and as the clouds shut out the sun the rain soon turned to a driving sleet. We were tired, cold and hungry and thoroughly in need of shelter. The top of a tiny spire showed itself through the mist below and I thought, "*Miklebaer* at last." Ólafur dashed our hopes by saying that this farm with its excellent buildings and its hospitable pastor was two hours ride beyond the metal church below us. He urged us forward but I refused as it was not possible to ride further, except in a case of life or death. So we reined into the *tún* of *Silfrastaðir,* Silver-Stead, and while we were dismounting a man, blind with age, tottered towards us on his cane and extended his trembling hand and in the Saga phrase, "he greeted us well." That little tumbled down home in

the mountain pass, that small bed in a cupboard in the wall, how good they looked to us! That Icelandic welcome! We had received it on the prosperous farms and in the city, yes in the more favored portions of the land, even in the home of the Governor, but never before, never since, has any abode seemed so pleasant and all other welcomes at home and abroad shrink in value when compared with the welcome and the cordial hospitality of this poor blind man of *Silfrastaðir,* who gave us the best he had and bade us "God speed" on the morrow.

During the night our ponies ran away and it was a long time before Ólafur found them. They were going, according to their habit, before the wind and were nearly down to *Miklebaer* when the guide found them. While he was pony hunting I repaired to the little kitchen, if such it may be called, and over a fire of dried sheep manure made some coffee and with the provisions in our packing boxes we made a good breakfast. We got away at ten thirty and soon after noon arrived at *Miklebaer* and turned into the *tun* enclosure to visit the grave of Frederick W. W. Howell, F. R. G. S. Howell was the author of the Pen Pictures of Iceland. He had spent many summers in the country and knew it the best of any Englishman. His illustrations are works of art and his descriptions of natural scenery are faithful and full of appreciation. Howell was the first to make the ascent of the *Öraefa Jökull,* 6,400 feet in height and the highest peak in Iceland. This was in August 1891. He lost his life in fording the *Heraðsvötn,* District-Waters, a broad, swift and deep river which flows through the valley of the *Skagafjörðr.* The place was opposite the farm of *Miklebaer.* This farm belongs to the church and within its cemetery the unfortunate Englishman is buried. A marble memorial

marks his resting place and bears the following inscription:—

In Loving Memory
of
Frederick W. W. Howell,
F. R. G. S.
Who Was Called to His Rest
From the Heraðsvötn River
3d. July 1901
Aged 44.
"Asleep in Jesus, Oh What Rest!
So them also which sleep in Jesus
Will God bring with Him."

The pastor invited us into his study and refreshed us with coffee and cakes and conversed with us in German and broken English. He had a good library of English, German and Icelandic works. Our stay was longer than we intended, for Ólafur, (this time it was a young lady and not the ponies that caused the delay), found a fair maiden of pleasing conversation. We finally started without the guide and later when he had overtaken us at the fiord and I teased him about his tardiness he stated that the maiden asked him to wait while she wrote a letter to a friend of hers in *Reykjavik* and requested him to be the messenger. It must have been a long letter. Had he collected as long a letter from each of the attractive maidens at the many farms where we called in the summer of 1910 he would have had a good sized mail by the time he reached the capital.

On arrival at the ferry we found a good boat into which we loaded four of the ponies at a time with the packing cases. It was here that we met the venerable poet, *Matthias Jochumsson*. Remounting we crossed a wonderfully rich grass plain. It is in this valley that the best ponies of Iceland are bred. Later in the day

we arrived at *Viðimýri,* Wide-Bog. Here we were fortunate in witnessing a pony-fair at which hundreds of ponies changed hands. They are gathered from the mountains for sale to the exporters and it is here that the Icelandic gentleman comes for his private saddle pony.

Steadily we climbed the mountain in a driving wind with some rain. The wind blew cold from off the *Skagafjörðr,* Cape-Fiord. The ocean was clear and an excellent view was had of *Drangey,* Lonely-Island. It was on this island that *Grettir,* the Strong, the favorite hero of Iceland, met his death at the hands of his enemies. He had been an outlaw for many years. Sometimes he made his home in the lava waste between *Hoffs Jökull* and *Láng Jökull.* I visited the cave in 1913 which is marked by several cairns. At one time he lived at *Arnævatn,* Eagle-Lake and at another he dwelt in the remote fastness of *Thórisdalr* at the south end of *Láng Jökull.* In the summer of 1913 I went to the entrance to this fastness. It is the finest retreat for an outlaw that any country could possible provide in its natural configurations. The *Saga* of *Grettir* relates that he found his way over the lava wastes of *Skjalbreith,* Broad-Shield, by sighting the summit of *Skjalbreith* through a hole in a block of lava and noting the intervening points of prominence. In the old days the youth of Iceland used to assemble on the level grass plain at the extreme northern end of *Thingvellir* during the annual meeting of the *Althing* to hold their sports. At one time *Grettir* came down from *Thórisdalr* in disguise and entered into the wrestling. One by one he threw all the champions from the different sections of Iceland and did it with apparent ease. The maidens sat upon the high conglomerate knob overlooking the plain and saw with sorrow their respective favorites beaten in the feats of strength. The seat upon which

they sat is known as *Meijarsoeti,* Maidens'-Seat. It was not till *Grettir* left the arena and climbed the narrow pass which runs upward beside *Meijarsoeti* that it was discovered that the unknown wrestler was in truth *Grettir,* though some of the wise ones had hinted as much.

The story of *Grettir's* life on *Drangey* is of great interest but too long for a full recital. If the reader desires to know more of the real hero of Iceland in the old days and the one most often mentioned at the present time he should read the *Grettir Saga.* It will give an account of his wanderings, his conflict with the ghost and his harder struggles with the men who desired to take his life because he had refused to leave his native land after the Althing had outlawed him with the greater outlawry. *Drangey* is an island in the middle of the great fiord and the sides are so steep that it is possible to ascend only at one place. With two men he took up his abode here and lived upon the sheep which the farmers had put upon the rock for summer pasture. The *Saga* relates that on a Christmas night his fire went out and that he swam to the mainland to replenish it. He entered the house by the shore and was recognized by an old woman. Several men, the foes of *Grettir,* were making merry in an adjoining room, but the old woman pitied him and, because it was Christmas night, gave him the coals and allowed him to depart in peace. Placing the fire in a small kettle, he swam back to *Drangey* and rekindled the fire in his stone stove.

The temperature was only three degrees above freezing when we descended the western slope of the mountain and arrivd at the farm, *Bolstaðarhlið,* Wood-Farm-Slope. There was a long delay in getting supper but it came at last in the shape of a hot lamb stew and we were provided with comfortable beds. We were told

that in the morning we could have oatmeal porridge, and, since it had been many days that we had had anything of this nature, we looked forward with pleasure to the breakfast. Having a long ride before us on the morrow, we solemnly arranged with Ólafur to start by eight-thirty. He agreed to have the ponies and the cases in readiness. We had often held these solemn councils but a stray pony, a broken pack saddle, a lost shoe or some other quite common mishap had always prevented our starting before one to three hours after the appointed time. This morning it was not the fault of Ólafur and there were none of the usual causes of delay. It was that oatmeal porridge and even the placid guide was disturbed at the delay. Well, at ten we sat down to enjoy that oatmeal with real thick, sweet cream in abundance. The combination was delicious as the oatmeal was thoroughly cooked. Then, I pulled out a long black hair and carefully concealed the presence of it from my companion. Soon I found another and this one was white. I could no longer refrain from communicating my discoveries and so I stated:—

"I have discovered exactly how long this oatmeal was cooked."

"Well, how long was it cooked and why this smile?"

I replied,—"The woman who started to prepare this porridge had black hair, but when she had finished it her hair had turned white."

After a short ride we came to the *Blandá*, Mingled-Waters, which was so swollen that it was necessary for us to proceed to the mouth of the river at *Blönduós* where there is a substantial bridge. The ride from this trading village south to the farm, *Hnausar*, Rough-Ground, was in a hard rain with the thermometer at one degree above freezing and with occasional gusts of snow that swept down from the ridge at our right

with the howling wind. With our heads bowed low over the saddle and the wind at our backs we saw little of the valley save that at the feet of the ponies. The wind increased and the storm drove up the valley from the Arctic Ocean with sufficient violence to drive from our minds everything save thoughts of a shelter. At seven-thirty we halted at the gate of the *tún* while Ólafur sought the *bondé* to ask the customary questions about food, shelter and grass for the ponies. I have never had the request refused but politeness demands that the traveller remain without the turf wall until the request is made of the farmer, or if he is absent, of his wife or oldest son. The Icelander within his turf wall is like a baron in his castle and as such must be recognized. Once the questions are asked the request is granted and the traveller then is placed at ease with all the freedom that is necessary.

The good wife built a fire of turf and sheep manure in the tall Norwegian stove in the guest room, took all our wet clothing to her kitchen to dry and prepared for us a satisfying and tasty supper. She kept the fire replenished till midnight and I remember no fire that seemed so good as this one. Before the fire was built and we stood about the cold stove with chattering teeth I knew something of how *Grettir* felt when he discovered that all his coals had turned to ashes out there on *Drangey*.

It rained and snowed by turns all night and at eleven when I looked out upon the farm the haycocks wore white capes. A small bedroom opened out of the guest room and the water came through its turf roof in many places in streams, in fact everywhere except upon the bed and why that was exempt I do not know.

The morning broke cold and windy with falling snow and the uncut grass protruded its emerald green through the white blanket. We looked towards the

south, listened to the gusty wind, glanced at the lowering heavens and returned to the heated stove. It was Sunday and we decided to let the ponies have a day of rest. They, poor beasts, were not grazing but stood with drooping heads and tails turned towards the wind. The ponies of Iceland! In no other place in the world will horses thrive under such treatment as they receive in this land. They are ridden or driven with their heavy packs all day, often upon grassless mountain slopes, fording deep and cold rivers, often swimming, often laboring in long reaches of sand or plunging in grassy bogs. When the work of the day is finished they are simply turned adrift to care for themselves. They are never groomed, never given any grain, never covered with a blanket; they have no sheltering stalls. They are simply turned loose in the storm as well as in the sunshine, or, into what they dread worse than any storm, among the swarms of savage midges. When the grass is good they are happy; they never knew any other life. What steed of English or American stables would care to become an Icelandic pony, to work all day for the chance to graze all night, and then, as I have so often witnessed, have their master end the days work in a dreary sand waste where willow leaves and scanty sedges offer the only forage?

The day passed rapidly and pleasantly. The farmer came to our sitting room to take coffee with us at noon and then invited me to go and see his pet saddle horse, a magnificant stallion. This I did with interest as I had never seen a stallion among the thousands of ponies I had found in the country. He saddled him and showed his different paces for some time about the *tún* and then Ólafur was invited to ride him. I photographed the farmer on his steed and then I was invited to ride the stallion. It is a mark of special favor for any farmer to allow another to mount his private pony;

and it is also a breech of etiquette to offer to mount another's pony. This is a custom that clings from the pagan days. We read in the *Saga of Hrafnkell, Frey's Priest,* how one man met his death by mounting the favorite horse of another. The story is as follows, but greatly abbreviated:—

Einarr engaged himself to watch the sheep of the Priest of Frey, *Hrafnkell,* and his master said to him:—

"I'll make a short bargain with thee. Thy business shall be to watch fifteen ewes at the mountain dairy and gather and carry home faggots for summer fuel. On these terms thou shalt take service with me for two 'half-years.' But one thing must I give thee, as all my shepherds to understand,—'Freymane' goes grazing in the valley with his band of mares; thou shalt take care of him winter and summer, but I warn thee of one thing, namely, that thou never be on his back on any condition whatever, for I am bound by a mighty vow to slay the man that ever should have a ride on him. There are twelve mares with him; whichever one of these thou mayest want, night or day, is at your service. Do now as I tell thee and mind the old saw,—'No blame is borne by those who warn.' Now thou knowest that I have said."

Einarr replied:—"I trust I am under no such luckless spell as to ride on a horse which is forbidden, least of all when there are other horses at my disposal."

Briefly, Einarr went to work, the time came when the sheep wandered; a rain and mist came down; the ewes had been absent many days; Einarr went down to the grass where the mares were grazing taking his saddle cloth and bridle, thinking to catch one and ride over the hills in search of the lost sheep. He could not catch one of the mares though he had spent all the

morning; but "Freymane was as quiet as if stuck buried in the ground." Einarr though that his master surely would never know, so he mounted the forbidden pony and "rode until middle eve," and "he rode him long and hard." "The horse was all dripping even every hair on him; bespattered he was all over with mire, and mightily blown. Twelve times he rolled himself, and then he set up a mighty neighing, and then set off at a quick pace down along the beaten track." * * * "Einarr ran after him but could not lay hand on him." * * * "He ran all the way along the valley never stopping till he came to *Aðalból*. At that time Hrafnkell sat at table, and when the horse came before the door it neighed aloud."

"He went out and saw Freymane and spoke to him; 'I am sorry to see thee in this kind of a plight, my pet; however thou hadst all thy wits about thee in coming thus to let me know what was the matter; due revenge shall be taken for this.' "

"In the morning *Hrafnkell* saddled a horse and rode up to the dairy; he had his axe in his hand but no other weapons about him. At this time *Einarr* had just driven the ewes into the pen, and lay on the top of the wall counting the sheep; but the women were busy milking. They all greeted *Hrafnkell* and he asked how they got on. *Einarr* answered; 'I have no good speed myself, for no less than thirty ewes were missing for a week, though now I have found them again.' Hrafnkell said he had no fault to find with things of that kind, 'it has not happened so often as might have been expected that thou hast lost the ewes. But has not something worse befallen than that? Didst thou not have a ride on Freymane yesterday?'

"*Einarr* replied,—'I can not gainsay that utterly.' "

"Why didst thou ride on this one horse which was forbidden thee, while there were plenty of others on

which thou art free to ride? Now this one trespass I could have forgiven thee, if I had not used words of such great earnestness already. And yet thou hast manfully confessed thy guilt."

"But by reason of the belief that those who fulfill their vows never come to grief, he leaped off his horse, sprang upon *Einarr,* and dealt him his death blow."

In the afternoon the Doctor from *Blönduós* arrived at the farm to pay a social call and the farmer brought him to our sitting room, while the eldest daughter served us with the usual social beverage in Iceland. Two pleasant hours passed during which we gained much information about Icelandic customs, local history and legends.

The rain came down still harder in the evening but we welcomed it as it promised warmer weather and bare ground on the morrow. So much water had come into our bed room that it was only by judicious side stepping and walking on the tops of the packing boxes that we were able to reach the bed without a cold and muddy footbath.

There are three things in Iceland that have never been counted:—The islands in *Breiðifjörðr,* Broad-Fiord, the lakes of *Arnavatnsheiði,* Eagle-Lake-Heath, and the conical hills of *Vatnsdalr,* Water-Dale. Our stopping place, *Hnausar,* which signifies rough ground, is in the midst of these peculiar hills and in the center of the valley. We spent three days among the hills and found them of marked interest to the geologist. Hundreds of acres are covered with the cones rising from the plain to an elevation of from twenty-five to over one hundred feet. Oftentimes they are so near together that their bases are confluent and thus seem to be double peaked in a few instances. Geologists have given different reasons for this queer formation. One states that they are of glacial origin and were left when

the ice melted in the form of moraines; another is of the opinion that they are the results of great avalanches upon the glacier, which in melting left them here. Another states that they are merely the weathered fragments of a local lava flow. I spent a day in their examination and so will give my reasons for rejecting the causes assigned by these gentlemen and substitute my own conclusions in order that future scientists interested in the geology of Iceland may confirm or refute according as they weigh the evidence.

They can not be glacial moraine as there is no evidence of any glacial action in any way upon any of the fragments and it must be remembered that as compared with glaciated areas in other lands Icelandic glaciation is as if it occurred yesterday. In fact glaciers are still covering many square miles of the table land. There is no evidence of any water erosion on any of the stones. They could not have been avalanches upon the ice sheet for there are no mountains near at hand from which such masses of material could have come. And if it is argued that the avalanches were at a distance it turns the problem once more into that of the moraine. The character of the valley and its low mountains will not permit our reason to accept either the glacial or the avalanche theory.

There is no evidence of any great lava flow either in plugs, intrusive sheets or surface flow, neither in the necessary abundance of scoriae and blistered fragments to warrant such a theory. And if there were, we must then explain why these are "cones" and *not craters* with blistered rims and solid slopes. We must turn to *Mývatn* for the explanation. It is my opinion that deep seated and violent subterrannean explosions of considerable frequency took place here, as in the case of *Hverfjall* the giant explosion crater of *Mývatn*. It heaved up the crust in crumpled masses, mingling the

different basalt formations of ancient flows which lay in superimposed sheets. How else can one account for the many kinds of lava in a single cone, the absence of blistering and cones in place of craters? I have performed an interesting experiment in the laboratory upon this theory and with results that seem to verify the above conclusions. A two liter copper beaker was chosen. It was half filled with clay dust of different colors in layers. This dust was prepared by thoroughly drying the clays, pulverizing and then dusting it through a double fold of cheese cloth. This gave me particles large enough for my miniature experiment. The beaker was then slowly heated from the bottom. After due process of time with the increase of heat the subterranean gases, in this case air in the dust, expanded. At first with slightly audible bumps and a faint trembling of the surface. These increased until the action became violent and small mounds were thrown up which formed true cones with mingled colors from the different depths.

Vatnsdalr is a fair and pleasant valley, when the sun shines. No wonder that it possessed a charm for the early settlers with its parallel mountain ridges of entrancing blue, its noble river expanding into fine sheets of water where trout are abundant and its fertile meadows of broad expanse. It is historic ground as well as legendary. It has known stirring days and its heroes were the bravest of any who wielded the axe and bill in the troublesome times when blood alone could recompense a personal affront or a crossed lover. A whole sheaf of *Sagas* relate the deeds of the men and women of Waterdale. The valley is the same as of old. The inhabitants point out the exact localities where the guest halls of the nobles stood and where their temples of sacrifice were reared to propitiate the gods of Valhalla; they show one where the champions

battled for their rights, where the lovers held their trysts and the mounds where the heroes were entombed. These incidents have been handed down from generation to generation, from father to son and the stories were oft repeated in the *bathstófa* during the long winter evenings when the Arctic shore was frozen and the wind whirled the drifting snows around their turf huts.

Besides the lengthy *Sagas* there are numerous shorter stories that have been preserved in written form such as that of *Gisli,* the Outlaw; *Grettir,* the Strong and *Glum.* It is a knowledge of the *Sagas* and the legends that spread the charm over this valley, that leads one from the present to the past by a jump backwards of many centuries. To visit Iceland, especially the *Saga Dales,* in ignorance of their history would be like tramping through Scotland without any acquaintance with Sir Walter Scott, or a sojourn in London without a knowledge of Dickens.

In most countries the progress of modern life, with its inventions and the eternal scramble for the latest style in everything, has obliterated much if not all of the past and one can only obtain the colors of the former ages in the ruins of a castle or cathedral or from the written pages of the antiquary. Not so in Iceland,—farms, mountains, rivers, lakes and meadows remain the same and under the same names given to them by the first settlers, though it be ten centuries of time. No railway or canal, no public improvements, modern cities or factories have obliterated the ancient landmarks. Even the manners and dress of the people are little changed from that early day. On the ruins of the tumbled-down hut of his grandfather the grandson erects his house in the same fashion and the descendents of the first imported sheep furnish skins for shoes still tanned, cut and fashioned after the ancient model. To visit the remote dales of Iceland is to be set back-

ward in history and fashions a thousand years.

The *Waterdale Saga* tells us how *Ingmundr,* a grand old Viking, after years of sea-roving and plundering along the shores of the southern seas settled in this valley with his followers. He had made a vow that no matter where he might roam that Norway should always remain his home. The witches of Finland prophesied that Iceland would be his resting place and so it was. At the farm called *Hof,* Temple, one may still trace the position of his great *Scali,* Banquet Hall, and there beside it winds the river where the old man lost his life. He had promised protection to a renegade who treacherously slew his benefactor. *Ingmundr* went to his high seat in the hall after the blow, wrapped his cloak around him and died alone. His grandson, *Ingólfr,* was "the handsomest man in all the northern lands." Here is a song written about him over 800 years ago by a little maiden who admired him:—

"All the pretty maidens
Wish to dance with Ingólfr;
All the grown-up damsels.
Woe's me, I'm too little!
'I too,' said the Carline,
'I will go with Ingólfr
While a tooth is left me,
While I've strength to hobble.'"

Trans. by Miss Oswald.

In the *Saga* of the farm of *Grimstunga,* Grim's Tongue, (*tunga* is frequently used with reference to a narrow strip of grass land in a sand waste or between masses of lava), at the head of the valley, we find the following story of *Ingólfr*:—

"An autumn feast was held at *Grimstunga* and a playing at the ball. *Ingólfr* came to the game, and many men with him from the Dale," (Water Dale.)

"The weather was fine and the women sat out and watched the game. *Valgerðr, Ottar's* daughter, sat on the hill-side and other women with her. *Ingólfr* was in the game and his ball flew far up among the girls. *Valgerðr* took the ball and hid it under her cloak and bade him find it who had cast it. *Ingólfr* came up and found it and bade the others go on with the game; but he played no more himself. He sat down by *Valgerðr* and talked the rest of the day."

It was the story of love that did not go smoothly for he flirted and did not propose to her father for her hand in marriage. Her father sold his farm and moved to the south. Man-slayings followed and *Valgerðr* was forced by her father to marry another man when *Ingólfr* deserted her for another maiden. He had many love affairs for he was inconstant. In the end he was wounded by outlaws and when dying he requested that he might be laid in the mound with his forefathers near the river path in Water Dale that "the maidens might remember him when they walked that way."

Valgerðr had a famous brother, *Halfreðr* nicknamed *Vandaeðaskald,* signifying the "Troublesome Scald." He was the favorite *scald* of the powerful Norwegian King, *Olaf Tryggvason,* who reigned from 995 to 1000 A. D. A full account of this King and of his favorite singer is given in *Heimskringla* by *Snorri Sturlason,* the Norse Historian, from which the following brief account is condensed.

Halfreðr was a wayward youth, given to wandering and adventure, a real Viking in spirit. He was born in 968 and raised at this very farm of *Haukagil,* Hawk-Gulley, where the notes for this chapter were roughly penned in 1910. He was "a tall man, strong and manly looking, somewhat swathy, his nose rather ugly, his hair brown and setting him off well."

A little brook tumbles down from the heath behind

the house, the rolling meadow reaches away to the river and beyond it the mountains rise in glorious colors in this evening light just as they did when *Halfreðr* played beside this same brook as a child and *Ingólfr* flirted with *Halfreð's* sister. The turf house and the *tún,* the noisy dogs bringing up the ewes for the evening milking, the swish of the scythe in the grass and the call of the plover on the heights,—all are as in the days of old and it requires little fancy to place this sturdy youth in his old surroundings.

He was a poetical genius, a favorite of kings and a terror to his enemies. He did not so often unsheath his sword in a quarrel as he employed his stinging rhymes which cut his enemy deeper than the sharpest sword. Like his sister, *Halfreðr* had his love troubles. *Kolfina* loved him and he reciprocated but her father chose otherwise and betrothed her to *Griss,* a man who had accumulated great wealth in the service of the Emperor at Constantinople. *Griss* was "rather elderly, short-sighted, blear-eyed;" but he could see well enough when he went to woo *Kolfina* that a handsome youth was kissing her at the door of the lodge. Caught by *Griss* in the very act, *Halfreðr* shouted to him as he took his reluctant departure:—

"Thou shalt have me for a foe, *Griss,* if thou wilt try to make this match."

The parents gave *Halfreðr* a good scolding and ordered him away at once. As he rides away he makes this rhyme:—

"Rage of the heath-dweller, trough-filler, beer-swiller,
Count I no more
Than the old farm-dog's yelp
At the farm door
Howling at parting guest,—who cares for his behest?
My song shall praise her best,
Her I adore."

Trans. by Miss Oswald.

Longfellow says:—

"Halfred the scald,
Gray-bearded, wrinkled, and bald."

This passage shows the wide poetic license which Longfellow took in dealing with the *Sagas* and the *Heimskringla* of *Snorri*. Scott's harpers were always old and gray and Longfellow infers that the Scalds were the same. The fact is that *Halfreðr* did not live beyond forty years of age. He was gay and reckless as were all of his cult; he was reckless of speech even in the presence of the king. He was always ready with a song whether at the court of *Olaf*, in the camp, on the sea in storm or in calm or in the brunt of the fight. He was constant in love and although he married a beautiful and wealthy woman he never forgot his early love for the fair *Kolfina*.

King *Olaf* had much trouble in converting him to Christianity and in getting him to take the christening. He succeeded as we shall see from the following quotation, but *Halfreðr* clung in secret to the faith of his fathers, the hope of a future life in *Valhalla* as we note from the many references to the old northern gods in his songs and the way in which he talks of them. So frequently did he call upon the pagan deities that *Olaf* often talked to him about it and mistrusted that he was not really converted to the Cross.

The Christening of Halfred The Troublous-Skald.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Heimskringla, Vol. I. *Sturlason.*

"On a day went the King a-walking in the street, and certain men met him, and he of them who went first greeted the King; and the King asked him of his name, and he named himself *Hallfreðr.*"

"Art thou the skald?" said the king.

Said he, "I can make verses."

Then said the King:—"Wilt thou take christening, and become my man thereafter?"

Saith he:—"This shall be our bargain: I will let myself be christened, if thou, King, be thyself my gossip, but from no other man will I take it."

The King answerest:—"Well, I will do that."

So then was *Hallfreðr* christened, and the King himself held him at the font.

Then the King asked of *Hallfreðr*: "Wilt thou now become my man?"

Hallfreðr said: "Erst was I of the body-guard of Earl *Hakon;* nor will I now be the liege man of thee nor of any other lord, but if thou give me thy word that for no deed I may happen to do thou wilt drive me away from thee."

"From all that is told me," said the King, "thou art neither so wise nor so meek but it seemeth like enough to me that thou mayest do some deed or other which I may nowise put up with."

"Slay me then," said *Hallfreðr.*

The King said: "Thou art a Troublous-Skald; but my man shalt thou be now."

Answereth *Hallfreðr*: "What wilt thou give me for a name gift, King, if I am to be called Troublous-Scald?"

The King gave him a sword, but no scabbard therewith; and the King said: "Make us now a stave about the sword, and let the *sword* come into every line."

Hallfreðr sang:—

"One only sword of all swords
Hath made me now sword-wealthy
Now then shall things be sword-some
For the Niords of the Sweep of sword-edge
Naught to the sword were lacking,
If to that sword were scabbard
All with the earth-bones colored.
Of three swords am I worthy."

Then the King gave him the scabbard and said: "But there is not a sword in every line."

"Yea," answers *Hallfreðr,* "but there are *three* swords in one line."

"Yea, forsooth," saith the King.

Now from *Hallfreðr's* songs we take knowledge and sooth witness from what is there told concerning King *Olaf.*

* * * * * * * * * * * *

In 1014, after a great sea fight in which a yard arm fell and inflicted a mortal blow, *Hallfreðr* lay dying on board of a crippled vessel which was drifting before the gale. Still mindful of conditions around him he makes the following stave, which was translated by Miss *Oswald*:—

"Down on my heart and side
Crashes the weatherworn spar;
Scarce ever so heavy a wave
Has swept o'er a boat before.
Wet am I, wave-washed and worn,
And shattered at heart and breast;
And the sea is aboard our craft,
And nowhere the scald can rest."

With his dying breath he chanted the following stave, showing that his early love, *Kolfina,* had not been forgotten during his long years of warfare and wanderings:—

"The binder of her wimpled brow
Will shade these lovely eyes, I know,
With white hands soft and tender.
The rain-storm flood will have its way
When she has heard how dead I lay,
Though once I did offend her,
When overboard the warriors cast
Her scald, her love,—of all the past,
The love she will remember."

Thus died in middle life one of the greatest of the Norse scalds. His had been a "troublous" life indeed. The duties of the scald were to improvise poetry on the instant, in praise of the King and in recounting the deeds of his favorite warriors in battle. He was the historian and the periodical at the same time; his utterances were respected and he was feared by prince and peasant. The scald had liberties at court and in the royal camp or on board the royal fighting ship not accorded to any other retainer.

CHAPTER XVI

REYKHOLT

"I think that I would wander far to view
Such scenes as these, for they would fill a heart
That lothes the commerce of this wretched world,
That sickens at its hollow gaieties."

—*Southey.*

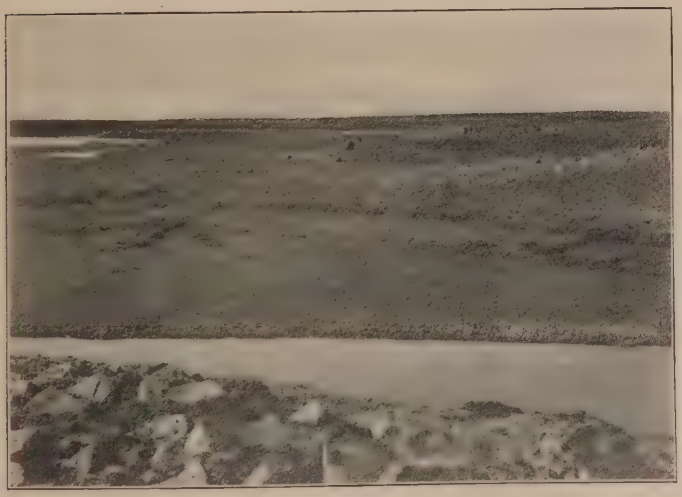
THE present house at *Haukagill* is finished inside with unpainted spruce from Norway, beautiful as old mahogany, having become soft reddish brown with age and frequent polishing with fine sand. Our bed chamber contained the pride of the family, a Connecticut clock adjusted to strike the hours and the quarters. Its gong was far from musical. The bells of Bruges had raised havoc with our sleep with their persistent struggle to be heard, but this clock, on a shelf at the head of the bed, reminded us every fifteen minutes that it also came from New England as well as we and was clamorous for recognition. After hours of sleeplessness we wished it had never left the Nutmeg State.

At nine in the morning we turned our backs upon this charming valley, climbed the steep hill and looked down at the farm house, the last we were to see for two days. We were now fairly upon the great plain of *Grimstungaheiði,* Grim's-Tongue-Heath, an extensive tract of desolation between the fertile valleys of the north and the glaciers of the great central plateau of Iceland. For a while there was a trace of a trail which soon disappeared. Hour after hour we plodded on, guided solely by the glimmer of the glaciers on the horizon and an occasional tumbled-down cairn of former days.

This tract is a broad and fresh moraine from the recently receded glacier, chaotic, empty, vast and dreary. There is nothing to relieve the monotony of the scene save the increasing mass of ice as the glaciers loom higher above the stony horizon. The angular fragments of lava, somber, gray, variously riven and confusedly hurled in piles, are as though some vast mountain had been crumpled like an eggshell and the fragments scattered by a titanic hand. No touch of verdure enlivens the cold ruin and weary waste, save at the margins of the numerous ponds and pools which glimmer like sheets of light in the dim distance. Otherwise, everything everywhere is like everything everywhere else. This heath is similar to the vast interior of Iceland, except that the traces of vegetation found here are often entirely wanting throughout large sections, notably north of *Hoffs Jökull,* as my pack train had occasion to testify in the summer of 1913. There are large sections of bristling lava, life-destroying sands and death-presaging glaciers which man has never explored.

All day we rode to the southward, and, save the wild swan on the ponds, no living creature crossed our trail. It was three in the afternoon before we found sufficient grass to afford the hungry ponies a bite; this was at the margin of a pool of glacial water that had filtered through the moraines. We regaled ourselves from the contents of our packing boxes, rested an hour, changed saddle horses and then pushed on over an unusually rough mass of terminal moraine at the foot of *Láng Jökull.* We turned towards the southwest, crossed a bog and arrived at the small *saelhus,* refuge, at *Arnavatn,* Eagle-Lake. This shelter of turf and stones was built for the protection of the sheep gatherers, who resort hither in the autumn to gather the sheep that have strayed to the highlands during the long

The Glacier of Láng Jökull in the Kaldidalr.



Láng Jökull. *Eiriks Jökull.*

Glaciers and Moraine on Arnavatnsheiði.

summer.

This shelter stands on the shore of the lake just under the shoulder of *Eyriks Jökull.* As this was one of the most unusual so was it the choicest of our experiences this summer. In front of the hut is a waterfall which connects the upper with the lower lake. Here upon this point of land *Grettir* lived for many years during his exile, six I believe. In ancient days this desert was infested with outlaws, desperate men, living upon sheep and cattle stolen from the farmers along the borders of the desert. Usually these were men who had taken human life and were ready to take others if it would secure to them their wild liberty. Considering the history of the place, its rough and weird aspect, its proximity to the life-destroying glaciers and the chaos so heavily stamped upon the land, it is not to be wondered that imagination has peopled this unfrequented area with trolls and witches, nor that a few people may be found to day who tell their children that outlaws still live in the interior around the glaciers and in the lava caves.

In the summer of 1913 I was camping at *Hvitávatn,* White-Lake, on the east side of *Láng Jökull* with the same Icelander, Ólafur Eyvindsson, who was with us in 1910. He said that he first visited White-Lake in 1909 and that after he had retired with another Icelander to their tent which was beside that of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Wright of Washington, D. C., they were thinking about the outlaws and Ólafur wondered if there was really any truth in the current stories of outlaws living here at the present time. At the close of conversation when sleep had fallen upon him, he awoke as with the sound of two men talking in a low tone in the Icelandic. He cautiously put his head out of the tent and with something like fear. He listened a few moments, the men drew nearer and he went to meet them.

To his pleasant surprise he found them to be a well known physician and his friend from *Reykjavik*. And this is all the truth there is to-day about outlaws in the interior of Iceland. There is only one thing to fear,—shortage of grass for the ponies. Grass the pony must have and feeding it to him is like feeding shavings to a roaring furnace. It is a rare sight to see an Icelandic pony lying down, for he will carry you all day and feed all night.

During the evening Ólafur and I shod the ponies, for the rough blocks had made havoc with their little feet. This was my first experience in the art of farriery. We hobbled them for the night and turned them into the bog beside the upper pond. Then we made great inroads upon our provisions. We gathered a few fragments of birch twigs and roots and some dried sheep manure and with this fuel were able to warm two cans of soup and to smoke the hut thoroughly. The smoke had the wholesome effect of driving out the dampness.

That evening is long to live in memory. We were fortunate in having no fog and a perfectly clear atmosphere. The vastness of the lava-riven plain, rolling away to the distant mountains, the network of ponds and glacial streams, glimmering in the lingering sunlight of the Arctic summer night, the great glacier, with blue-green walls and prismic domes, upon whose front hung scores of streams like strings of shining pearls,—such was the framework of the picture. The smoke from our root fire curled lazily upwards into the clear and rarified air from the diminutive pile of turf and lava that was to be our shelter for the night. The swan led their young from lake to lake in front of the camp and sang throughout the glorious night.

The hardness of the improvised bed of boards and saddles, or, perhaps it was the charm of the landscape, forbade my lengthened morning slumber and three

o'clock found me crouched in the shelter of the cairn, drinking in the wonders of the scene,—glacier, lake and rolling moraine with the sunlight over all.

Eight in the morning, breakfastless, found us in the saddle. The ponies had fared poorly here, and if we were not to spend another night in the desert we must ride until we found grass, where pony and man could eat to repletion.

The heath over which we took our morning ride is uninviting, dreary and somewhat awe inspiring. There are many beds of flowers in sheltered places. The purple armaria, sandwort and stone-crop are the smiles of Flora upon the face of an Arctic desolation. As one reclines upon the flowered mounds between the tussocks of grass, basking in the genial sunshine and piling the empty tins around him, he forgets for the moment that he is under the cliffs of a mighty sheet of perpetual ice, that he is entirely dependent upon his ponies and the scanty grass they are now so greedily eating. Breakfast over, we rode for hours under the front of *Eyriks Jökull,* with many a stony moraine to climb and glacial torrent to ford. There is a legend concerning the name of this mountain which is worth relating as it shows something of the stirring times of the old days in spite of the absurdity of the conclusion.

A band of outlaws assembled in the great cavern of *Surtur* and lived upon ponies, sheep and cattle stolen from the farmers near *Kalmungstunga,* Kalmungs-Tongue, and became a great menace to the entire region. Many attempts had been made to capture them but without avail. Finally a lad volunteered to leave his home and join the outlaws and act in the capacity of a spy. He did his work so well that he won the full confidence of the outlaws for he killed sheep belonging to his own father and brought them to the cave. The time came when, at the signal from the

boy, the farmers assembled to take the outlaws unawares. Gathering at the entrance of the side cave in great *Surtshellir* in large numbers they slew all of the outlaws except *Eyrik*. This man was the strongest of all men of his time and made a stout resistance. However, the farmers hacked at him with their swords and cut off both feet at the ankles and both hands at the wrists. Having no way in which to longer defend himself, *Eyrik* turned a cartwheel on his bloody stumps across the blistered lava, up the ice slope and to the very summit of the glacier. In this manner he escaped and if you doubt it you can still see the blood red craggs of fire scorched lava over which he rolled a human wheel. He is, if this story is true, the only man who has ever gained the summit of this, the second mountain in height in Iceland and from him the mountain takes its name.

In the afternoon we came upon the great *Hallmundarhraun,* Hallmundar's-Lava, twisted, crumpled, cracked and tangled, grey with lichens and Icelandic moss in patches and alive with ptarmigan, plover and whimbrels. Beneath this lava sheet is *Surtshellir,* Surtur's-Cave. Before we explore this chamber of fire origin it is well to pause for a moment and glance at the Norse mythology relative to *Surtur.*

In the *Edda* of *Saemund,* the Wise, we find the "Song of *Vafthruðnis.*" This is a dialog between *Odin,* who, under the disguise of *Ganrade,* visited the *Jötunori* to converse with their gigantic chief *Vafthruðnis,* to determine which was the wiser. Their discourse was concerning the origin of the world and the races of men. When *Odin* entered the giant's hall he was accosted by the master as follows:—

"What mortal he who dares to come,
Unbidden, to my awful dome
To hold discourse? For never more

Shall he his homeward way explore;
Unless he happly should exceed,
What wisdom is to me decreed."

After a lengthy and interesting dialog, *Odin* proposes a question which the giant can not answer, so *Vafthruðnis* replies:—

"None know since time its race hath run
What *Odin* whispered to his son.
The fate of gods and mystic lore
With thee no longer I explore.
Thou, by the hand of knowledge led,
The fatal stroke of death has fled;
And since thy wisdom I have tried,
Hear *Vafthruðnis* thus decide,—
'In mysteries of every kind,
Thou are the wisest of mankind.'"

Trans. by Cottle.

In this Ode we are told that *Surtur* was the adversary of *Odin,* that he dwelt in the Antarctic,—

"Where decked with many a shining car,
Gods and great *Surtur* rush to war."

This was on the fabled plain of *Vigriði,* where "a hundred miles around" on the wreck of the fiery elements the gods battled with their enemies and with the enemies of the mortals whom they protected. One article of the Norse mythology states that *Surtur,* the black prince of the nether regions, should come from the south and set the world on fire. Here where the devastation of volcanic fire blast is terrible, where a whole valley is filled with the scorched and blistered lava flow from the ice-crowned volcanoes, here where the great, black cavern extends for a mile under ground, the early settlers located the abode of the dread black prince, *Surtur,* and most fittingly. It was with a knowledge

of this cave in his mind that Jules Verne wrote his story of "A Journey to the Center of the Earth."

Beside the entrance and on a mound of crumpled lava stands a *varða,* cairn, to mark the way. Hundreds of these cairns have been built in the past centuries throughout the travelled portions of Iceland to guide the traveller over the mountain passes, across the sandy deserts and extensive wastes of glacial moraine as well as to point the direction to places where grass may be found for the ponies. There is a style in Icelandic cairns as in women's clothes and one can tell by their outward appearance at what period they were built. They reminded *Henderson* of the passage in Jeremiah xxxi, 21,—"Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps."

A portion of the roof of the cavern fell in at some remote period and this is the entrance. We climbed down with some difficulty to the snow bank and found a ptarmigan perched upon a block of stone. I had no difficulty in approaching within ten feet and she waited for me to take two photographs. This is the largest and the longest lava tunnel known. It is not, by any means the largest cave, but the largest underground passage by which lava formerly flowed that has been explored. It was formed by the lava filling the floor of the valley and cooling on top and then draining out underneath to some lower level. It was in exactly this same manner that the great lava flow came down from *Skjalbreith,* filled *Thingvellir* and then drained out and left the great plain between the mountains to fall to form that wonderful formation previously described in chapter six.

Vergil says,—*"facilis descensus Averno"* but we did not find it easy to descend into the *Averno* of *Surtur,* nor to follow the cavern once we had made the descent. We purchased candles at *Akureyri* for this purpose

and lighting them we entered the chamber with one in each hand; there being three of us we had six candle power. "How far that little candle throws his beams," of Shakespeare, was all too short a distance in this blackness. A little beyond the entrance is a side passage which we entered and where we found hundreds of bones of sheep and horses. This was the place formerly occupied by the above mentioned outlaws and thus far the legend above related is a truth. There being no animals in Iceland large enough to carry flesh into this corner it is clear that they were taken here by the hand of man. There are many hundreds of them showing what an extensive use was made of the retreat in the old days. Henderson mentions them in 1817 and Olafsen and Povelsen found them in 1753 so there is no doubt of their great age and we may justly conclude that these bones are those left by the outlaws. As I write I have two of them before me, one a vertebra of a sheep and the other a rib of a pony. This rib had been broken while the horse was living and had been healed again as the callosity testifies. As I look at this ancient bone I often wonder what a story it could relate of the cave where it has rested these hundreds of years and of the deeds of that lawless age.

For the first quarter of a mile the floor of the cave is strewn with great basaltic plinths that have fallen from the roof from time to time. Each stone was damp, dripping wet or coated with ice from the water that has percolated through the roof. The blocks were so large that in climbing over them we frequently found ourselves in holes up to the waist and as our candles gave only a baleful glimmer it was difficult to make progress. One can not step down into these holes without first assuring himself where the bottom is. Once down he must crawl up over the slippery

stones on the opposite side.

The cavern runs straight as if laid out with a theodolite and the roof is arched with plinths and the walls are covered in places with patches of lava stalactites, which spread their nets of lace-like lava in strange fantastic forms. The dome is from forty to sixty feet high and the cavern is about thirty feet in width. As we proceeded we found more and more the deficiency of our candles in giving sufficient light for us to take advantage of the way, if indeed there is any advantage of one place over another.

After a weary climb over the slippery rocks we came to the reaches of ice, the accumulations of water that seep through the vault. Here the roof is hung with ice stalactites that often extend from the dome to the floor and present a wonderful sight, for the light of the candles, which refused to reflect from the blackened walls, glitters and plays on the ice in a beautiful manner. Great stalagmites of ice stand out of the murky gloom like spectres of the departed outlaws who haunted these underground chambers in the ancient day of Iceland's lawlessness. We fastened the candles in the top of these huge white candlesticks and made a flashlight of the ice wall before us, which had brought us to an abrupt stop and where the journeys of most of the tourists end. The vapor hung heavily in the freezing air and the smoke from the candle flame, in the absolute quiet of the air, hung suspended or twined in long, curling bands of moisture laden smoke, which assumed fantastic forms, reminding us of the wraiths that disturb the midnight slumbers of guilty dreamers in the castle-haunted dungeons of mediaeval days.

At first it seemed impossible for us to scale the ice wall with any means at our disposal but by dint of much exertion it was accomplished. We knew that Povelsen in his visit and later Henderson, had deposited coins

in the cairns which Povelsen had built at the far end of this cave. We had brought with us two Lincoln cents of the date of 1910 for the express purpose of placing them in the cairn. Ólafur ascended on my shoulders and gripping the lava stalactites on the wall managed to ascend. With his feet engaged in the crevices of the wall, he reached down and drew up Mrs. Russell, who stood on my shoulders. The two then formed a living chain by which I climbed to the top of the ice. Under the ice wall there was some water but the passage was too long and the ice columns too near together for a passage in this direction. Once on the top the way became easier. The ice sloped in a gentle declivity to the floor of the tunnel and when we left it we found a continuation of the heavy blocks of stone for some distance. This was followed by finer material and eventually by sand which made the walking much better. At the end of an hour of hard labor we arrived at the end of the tunnel and found the ancient cairn. We removed the capstone and with the wax of our candles cemented the two Lincoln cents, left our cards, replaced the capstone and retraced our weary way.

The return was as arduous as the inward journey, for we had slipped over the icy rocks and into the holes so often that our woolen gloves were cut to threads and our boots still show the scars of those ignominious slides. Nowhere else in Iceland have I ever felt the least fear of danger, neither in fording the glacial rivers, in the terrible deserts, on the ice mountains, nor in sleeping in the crater of *Askja,* Bowl, with ice beside my tent and columns of steam and sulfur gases rising from the solfatara in front, but, in this cave the thought was ever present with me,—"those blocks of stone, some of them weighing a ton, each has fallen from that lofty dome, when will the next one fall?" The experience

was worth all the labor for we had been in the actual home of the outlaws, had worked our way to the far end of the longest and grandest lava tunnel known, we had seen the beautiful ice barrier, beautiful as the altar screen in the great cathedrals of Europe and we had left positive proof of our labor in the ancient cairn. No one should omit this visit if he is near this portion of Iceland. When he has issued from the darkness into the sunlight, if he desires more of the same experience he will find a similar tunnel not far from *Surtshellir,* which was discovered in 1909.

That night we reached *Kalmungstunga,* a prosperous farm within the shadows of *Geitlands Jökull,* Goat-Land, and *Ök Jökull,* Yoke. This is a new farm house with spacious and airy rooms and well furnished. The farmer is obliging though he has a reputation of overcharging his guests. After a well cooked dinner we repaired to rest, not having slept more than three hours out of the last forty-eight. A little after midnight I was aroused by Mrs. Russell, who was saying:—

"There is some one in our room."

After a little I awoke sufficiently to see a man standing at the foot of the bed occupied by Mrs. Russell. I asked,—

"Who is there and what is wanted?"

"It is Ólafur. The Governor of Iceland with his daughter has arrived and he wishes a bed," replied the guide.

"Well, let him have one if he can find it. We are too tired to give up these."

"The farmer does not want them, but there is one folded up under your bed. If I can get it the Governor will have it set up in the hall and sleep there."

So saying, he took away the bed and we were soon asleep and did not awaken till the Governor sent word

to us at ten in the morning that he would like our company at breakfast. The farmer's wife prepared a special breakfast, cooking a young lamb. The good wife brought our her best dishes and loaded the table with her choicest food, for even in Iceland, it is not every morning that the Governor takes breakfast with the peasants.

The farmer at *Kalmungstunga*, in former days, was accused by English writers of overcharging travellers. In comparison with other Icelandic rates it must be stated that there is still some truth in the assertion. However, he is enterprising, has built a fine large house with many arrangements for comfort and all his supplies have to be transported from the coast on the backs of the ponies. These things are expensive. If the traveller enjoys unusual comfort here or elsewhere in Iceland it is no more than common justness that he should pay unusual prices for his accommodation. On this farm there has recently been constructed a re-inforced concrete stable, spacious enough for housing 500 sheep besides numerous horses and cows. The Governor pointed out to me the signs of prosperity while we were saddling the ponies and stated that more of the farmers might do as well if they had the enterprise. I might say with reference to our own bill at this farm that it was moderate but this is possibly due to the fact that I had been of some assistance in treating one of his favorite ponies that had a bad saddle gall on the shoulder.

It was one in the afternoon when we parted with the Governor to meet him some days later in his beautiful home in *Reykjavik*. We then rode down the green slope, and through the birch copse to the river, which we found easily fordable, though it has a bad reputation. Looking up from the hayfield, with its

harvest in the full gathering, with men and women busy, the ice-crowned pyramids stand,—

> "Like giants clad in armor blue,
> With helmets of a silver hue."

This view is of great interest and beauty and I gazed longingly to the peaks that enclose *Thorisdalr,* Thief's-Dale, and desired to climb those ridges of tumbled moraine and examine that great wall of eternal ice that hangs above. The lack of sufficient time made it impossible. This pleasure was experienced in 1913 when I came into *Kaldidalr,* Cold-Valley from the opposite direction, having pitched my camp at *Brunnar,* Springs, for several days. This view from *Kalmungstunga* leaves no doubt in the mind of the traveller that he is in the land of *ice;* but when he turns towards the west, passes into the green valley of the *Hvitá* and comes into close proximity with the numerous hot springs scattered over the plains and along the banks of the river a more temperate climate is suggested.

Having crossed the *Geitlandsá,* Goat-River, we followed it down to the *Barnafoss,* Child-Falls, so named because of the drowning of some children at this place by accident. Some guide books call these falls the *Geitlandsáfoss,* Goat-River-Falls. In ancient times, when places were named in Iceland there must have been many goats in various portions of the country for we came across the name in various places; thus there are several "goat" mountains, "goat" gullies, "goat" rivers, etc. Personally I have seen one flock of goats only in the entire range of my travels and that was near *Ljósavatn.* The explanation is that they will not stand the wet climate as well as the sheep. When the cold driving rains sweep down the mountain slopes the goats run to shelter while the sheep will continue their feeding.

At these falls the water, in a series of three strong leaps, drops over one hundred feet into the canyon. The rock formation at this point is of interest to the geologist, for there is a large mass of metamorphosed obsidian. It is the only rock formation of this character that I have ever witnessed, either in position or as samples in a collection of minerals and rocks in science museums. An examination of this formation leads to the following conclusion. In an early eruption a large mass of obsidian was formed at this place. During a more recent lava flow the heat of the adjacent flowing rock rendered this mass of obsidian plastic; this caused it to stick to the passing lava stream, like molten glass, and it was thus pulled, twisted and stretched into its present shape.

This is a lovely series of *fosses*. The water from the rapidly melting glaciers pours out of the narrow confines of the basaltic canyon and at the foot of each fall forms a grand basin of emerald green water in a weird rock setting. Towards *Kalmungstunga* there is a good sized forest, for Iceland, and the grass plains, through which this canyon cuts a great gray gash, form a real oasis in this elevated lava waste, shut in by towering mountains capped eternally with adamantine ice.

But by far the greatest interest here is the series of waterfalls, at the foot of the *Barnafoss,* which pour out of the lava in a half-mile series of cascades and waterspouts. North of *Kalmungstunga* the waters from *Eyriks Jökull* flow into the lava and doubtless into subterranean channels like the tunnel of *Surtshellir*. This river flows many miles under ground and reappears at this point beside the brink of the *Hvitá* canyon. The rock formation which makes this strange waterfall possible is as follows:—

A rift in the ancient basalt, doubtless the result of an earthquake, formed the canyon of the *Geitlandsá;* later,

another flow of lava swept down the valley and stopped at the very brink of this rift so that two great lava flows stand in sight, one above the other. Between these two sheets of lava flows the lost river from the glaciers and here it spurts out in a long series of cascades side by side. It is one of the finest sights in Iceland and one that the traveller in Iceland usually misses because it is off the regular trail. The guides do not always call attention to it and I fear that many of them do not know of its existence. It is a fact that few Icelanders know their own country, even the portion of it which they sometimes attempt to show to tourists. There are a few guides who know the travelled portion and know it thoroughly; these men look askance upon their fellows who act as guides and do not know every detail of the route, its history and its legends. The real Icelandic guide will, if you encourage him the least bit, show every point of interest and relate all the history and the legends. A story is told by the guides at *Reykjavik* of one of their fellow countrymen who attempted to guide a man from *Geysir* to *Gullfoss*, a distance of from one and a half to two hours ride. After wandering about the country all day and a part of the night they returned to *Geysir* without having seen the falls. He will never hear the end of it in *Reykjavik*. We have Ólafur to thank for many profitable hours in his beloved land. The real guide loves every spot to which he takes you and he feels that there is nothing like it, nothing half so good anywhere else in the world. The enthusiastic guide, filled with the love of his country and steeped in its traditions is a boon to a traveller, no matter in what land he seeks new scenes.

It was late when we left the falls and so we hastened across the rolling, grass-grown hills to *Reykholt*, Steam-Stead. Down the long slope and across the usual grass

bog we rode and into the enclosure by the house where we were welcomed and given comfortable quarters by the pastor. This is historic ground, the cite of the stead of *Snorri Sturlason,* "The Heroditus of the north."

Snorri was born in 1178, when only three years of age he went to fostering at the home of *Saemund,* the Wise, at *Oddi. Saemund* died when Snorri was nineteen. Snorri's father had considerable property but after his death, Snorri's mother, described as a "gay young widow" wasted the substance and left the son to enter life's activities with little. In 1199 Snorri married the daughter of *Bersi,* the Wealthy, who lived at *Borg,* the home of the famous *Skallagrim.* Snorri was now twenty years old and he entered directly into public affairs. He early became embroiled in partisan feuds but continued to gain power and following. This lead to his attaining the position of the *Goði* of his district. The *Goði* was a priestly ruler whose power and influence was supreme. If one desires to know more of the life and functions of this ancient official of the early days of Iceland he can get no better account than that left in the writings of Snorri.

Snorri at this time obtained the stead of *Reykholt* as a freehold and at once separated from his wife. The date of this occurence is prior to 1209 for we read that the Bishop of *Holar* spent the "winter of 1209 at *Reykholt* with *Snorri Sturlason.*" He had thus won the choicest holding in the entire valley as well as the enviable position of *Goði.* "He now became a great chieftain with ample means." In 1215 he was elected Speaker-at-Law, at the early age of thirty-seven and for a term of three years. This was the highest honor in the land.

Snorri was a statesman, a poet, a scholar and a historian. It is in the latter capacity that he is of the most

interest to us. In 1218 he went to Norway and was made a welcome guest at the homes of several of the Earls and at the court of King *Hakon* on account of his winning ways, his ready wit, his commanding presence and the songs that he composed in honor of his friends. He tarried two winters in Norway and it was during the second winter that his love of wealth and power was used by the King as a lever to influence him to betray Iceland into the hands of the Norwegian monarch. Snorri and his warlike brothers had often been embroiled in feuds especially with the masters of the trading ships from Norway and from Orkney. From his position as *Goði,* Snorri had the power to fix the prices and he often took advantage of his power to enrich himself at the expense of the foreigners. The result of these troubles was that an armed expedition was to be sent to Iceland by the orders of King *Hakon* under the conduct of Earle *Skuli* to avenge their countrymen who had been put to death in Iceland. Snorri knew what would be the outcome of this expedition, how it would develop into a long and hostile strife between the two countries and with most persuasive language he assuaged the anger of the King and his Earle and held out prospects that Icelanders might become the vassals of *Hakon.* This suited the King, so Snorri was made a "landed-man," the highest position to which one of the King's subjects could be elevated. Snorri, as a vassal, immediately gave to the King all of his great estates in Iceland. The King immediately returned them all to Snorri as his "landed-man" and in the form of a Royal Grant. This swapping for an empty title was the greatest mistake of Snorri's life, and one that eventually led to his premature death. The Icelanders never knew the real reason for this act and they could bear no treason. Snorri, with all of his shrewdness, did not forsee the outcome. In 1220

Árhver, River Hot Springs near Reykholt.

Reykholt, Ancient Stead of Snorri, Typical Icelandic Farm.

he returned to Iceland with great gifts from both Earle and King. When he landed in the Westmann Islands in pomp the people became suspicious of him and made slurring jests about him even making parodies upon his own poems which cut Snorri to the quick.

But he recovered his power and again won the confidence and esteem of nearly all of the people and in 1222 they again made him Speaker for the second time. It is quite probable that Snorri repented of his plan to betray Iceland to Norway and we know that his excuse was to save Iceland from immediate invasion. It is to be regretted that Icelanders did not fully understand his reason. Most of Snorri's troubles came from feudal strife with his own relatives, especially his nephew, *Sturla*. At one time this ungrateful nephew appropriated all of his uncle's estates in *Borg* and endeavored to make himself the mighty man of Iceland. We can not enter into the long conflict, how the people took sides with both parties, how a thousand armed men marched down on peaceful *Borg*, how Snorri in sorrow returned to Norway, tarried awhile and then came back to his home in *Borg* only to meet death in the cellar of his own house. It may all be read in the story written by his nephew, *Sturla Thordson*.

Snorri was a man of peaceful disposition, avoiding arms when arbitration could be employed, a man of business but not a man of action as men were active in his day. He did not choose the turmoil of political strife into which he was drawn. It was love of wealth and vanity that led to his weakness at the court of *Hakon* and which was misunderstood in Iceland and which gave his enemies an opportunity. This was the one great mistake of his life and he endeavored to atone for the weakness, but his enemies, though they never knew the full story of this affair, never forgave him. He paid for his error by being hewn to pieces

in the cellar of his home at *Reykholt* on September 22, 1241. The mound of the great house that was pulled down upon his remains has never been disturbed and the beautiful marguerites have bloomed above it for centuries.

As a historian Snorri will always hold high rank. The *Heimskringla,* the Story of the Kings of Norway, is a faithful picture of the times, impartial, straightforward,—it is the story and not the historian that the reader has before him when he opens these pages. Only once in that long history is there any comment by the author. There is none of the so called "philosophy of history" which has fogged so many historical pages that have been written in modern days. Writers may well take a lesson from Snorri, who *"let facts deliver the verdict,* keeping his own judgment to himself." Here in the dale of *Reykholt,* beside his steaming springs and with his flocks and herds about him, Snorri writes of the great kings of Norway, of their wars and their wanderings, their labors for Christianity and the uplifting of their subjects. He bears us away to Scotland and to England and often to Ireland, we learn of the correspondence with the Emperor Frederick and King Louis of France, we learn of James of Aragon, of William the Conqueror and Alphonse of Castile,—he takes us to far away Algeria to Tunis and to Greece, to Venice and Constantinople and to holy Jerusalem. In 1300 he was described as "a man to our knowledge most wise and fair-minded."

Snorri's language is simple, yet dignified, clear in thought and vivid in the picture portrayed and in scenes described. His sentences are short and graphic, clear and concise. His dialogs are frequent and to the point. Silence, where it is sure to arouse the interest of the reader, is artfully employed as is shown in the kidnapping of *Harek* and in the mysterious loss

of two of King *Olaf's* ships at *Faroe*. In humor, also, Snorri is a master and brings into his story bits of mirth and wit that make his pages sparkle and give point to the story he is writing. Witness the good wife who objected to the King's using the middle of the towel in the morning to wipe his face when he should have used the lower end in the morning, the middle at noon and the top at night, thus saving her two towels. His wit and his stories give point to his writings and will insure their life as long as people love to dwell upon the customs of their predecessors. Impartial, faithful, clear, Snorri brings the story of the ancient times among the Norsemen down to his own day, weaving into his warp the threads of fact that bound the Viking to the British Isles, the sunny Mediterranean and the Holy Land as well as to his beloved Iceland. He has erected for himself an enduring monument.

It is a tumbled mound, this grass-grown pile at *Reykholt,* but it is all that is left of Snorri's stately manor. In the quiet of the evening I stood upon the heap, and the past of Iceland's history rushed before me, its long Viking period, the coming of the Cross and the troublesome times that followed; in the story of Snorri I had learned of Norway's ancient days and Iceland's matchless heroes. It is the same quiet meadow at my feet and the same blue ridge in the distance that met the gaze of Snorri, the people are the same in race and customs but in other things how changed. The Cross has wrought its full influence. Were this mound in other lands the spade would long since have explored its recesses in search of relics and mementoes of this great man. It is sacred to the Icelander and has never been disturbed.

Beside the mound is *Snorrilaug,* Snorri's Bath. Next to the *Heimskringla* the bath is his greatest monument and serves better to perpetuate the memory of the

Sage of *Reykholt* than any thing that other hands could have wrought. It is circular in form, fifteen feet in diameter and constructed of split stones which were fitted in an exact manner and joined by means of a cement made on the spot by Snorri himself out of the pulverized geyserite. The floor of the bath is of split tufa and cemented with care. A stone bench, capable of seating thirty persons is built around the inside of the bath with the wall for a back. A hot spring, called *Scribla,* is located 500 feet from the bath and from *Scribla* to the bath Snorri constructed an underground passage out of stones all carefully cemented together. In 1733 this conduit was shaken by an earthquake and the Rev. Finn Jonson, Bishop of *Skalholt,* repaired it. Aside from this incident, the bath stands to-day as when Snorri was killed beside it. The steps from his house led directly down into the bath. It is a masterpiece of work that remains intact after the centuries so that one may turn on the hot water from *Scribla* and use it to-day as did Snorri during the first half of the thirteenth century.

The valley of *Reykholt* contains many excellent hot springs, some of which have lost part of their former power and do not spout because of the disarrangement of their tubes by recent earthquakes. On a quiet day steam rises from many places in the valley and along the banks of the river. There is one spring of unique formation and peculiar in its situation, the *Áhver,* River-Hot-Spring. It is in the middle of the river that divides the valley. The river is broad but shallow and the water is cold. In the middle of the stream rises the mound of the hot spring several feet above the water. This mound contains three orifices out of which boiling water pours vigorously. We waded out to this hot mound and climbed to the top. There is no danger of being scalded because the springs no

longer spout as in former days on account of the before mentioned earthquake, which has disturbed the tubes. In place of the former periodical spouts of hot water there is now a continuous flow in which the water rises one or two feet above the mouth of the tubes and escapes with much spluttering and accompanied with large volumns of steam. These tubes are a foot or more in diameter. It is a singular location for a hot spring but there is another phenomenon even more surprising. Below the mound of geyserite in the channel of the river there is a long series of holes in the river bed out of which boiling water spurts with such violence in places as to eject steam up through the cold water. Our ponies in fording this stream were quite shy of these hot holes in the bed of the river and insisted on going far down stream.

The valley is rich in grass, with many fine herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. It was one of these rich pasture lands at the foot of the snowy mountains, in Iceland that led Henderson, who realized how dependent was the farmer upon the grass, to quote from Proverbs as follows:—

"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks and look well to thy herds; for riches are not forever, nor doth the crown endure to every generation. The hay appeareth and the tender grass showeth itself, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of thy field. And thou shalt have goat's milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household and for the maintenance of thy maidens."

Yes, Iceland, the grass is thine and the flocks are thine. Nature has cruelly deprived thee of mines and forests, of warmth for cultivating thy rich soil; but she has peopled thee with a noble race, cradled amidst thy fire-born hills which are crowned with everlasting

ice. She has given to thee sufficient grass for thy numerous flocks that thou mayest be clothed and fed. An Arctic ocean "laves the feet of the White Lady" and its every billow teems with the choicest of fish. In exchange for these the merchant brings to thy marts those products of modern life which Europe calls necessities but which to thee are luxuries.

A land of wonder is thy birthright, marvellously wrought by fire and ice. It appeals to him who four times has visited thy shore and has explored the inmost recesses of thy deserts, it appealed to thy ancestors ten centuries since as a haven of liberty; mightily it appeals to thee to-day. Thy sons upon Dakota's plains, thy daughters by the Winnipeg,—truants from thy hallowed dales and sloping greens,—oft feel the wrenching of the heartstrings and oft turn back to fatherland and home. Thy thousand years and more of warfare with the elements and thine own internal strife, thy centuries of thraldom to priestly power and greed of foreign merchant, thy years of famine and devastation by shaking earth and burning mountain have left their mark deep graven in thy forehead. But, —Thou art FREE. Before thee the future opens with promise her ever widening portals, a promise radiant as the bow of *Baldar* which oft spans thy misty vales. Let not internal strife, the copying of foreign fashions and the jealously of prospering neighbor be thy undoing. Out of the terrible past hast thou come with many a reprimand and many a sign to point the way which thou shouldst go, as plainly as thy *varðr* guide the fog-bound traveller upon thy mountain moors.

If a foreigner, who has long studied the factors of thy problem and knows something from experience of thy living struggle, may offer advice and not offend,—it would be the quoted wisdom of Solomon:—

"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,"

and then the words of the poet will be thy experience:—

> "Still, even here, content can spread a charm,
> Redress the clime, and all its rage disarm,"—

and thine own saying will be full of truth:—

"ICELAND IS THE BEST PLACE ON WHICH THE SUN SHINES."

APPENDIX

ICELANDIC PRONUNCIATION

Accent:—The *stress* is always on the first syllable.

Vowels:—The vowel sounds vary considerably from the modern English and much resemble the old Anglo-Saxon. Some changes have taken place in these sounds since the classical period of the Icelandic literature which was in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The following key will assist the reader to pronounce the Icelandic terms in this volume.

a	is pronounced	like	A	in	far.
á	"	"	OU	"	loud.
e	"	"	E	"	let.
é	"	"	YE	"	yellow.
i	"	"	EE	"	meek.
í	"	"	I	"	pit.
o	"	"	OA	"	road.
ö	"	"	U	"	murmur.
ý	"	"	EE	"	meet.
ae	"	"	I	"	prize.
au	"	"	OI	"	coin.
ey	"	"	AY	"	hay.
ei	"	"	AY	"	hay.

Consonants:—The alphabet was taken from the Latin with the addition of two characters Þ *thorn* and *ð ith*. The two have the sound of TH in *thin;* the first is initial and the second may be in any syllable if it is not initial, as *ð* in *Seyðisfjörðr,* pronounced say-this-fur-thur.

The consonants have practically the same values

as in English except the following, which should be noted:—

f *before* L or N has the sound of B, thus,—
Krafla is pronounced as if spelled *Krabla.*
Hrafn, (raven,) is pronounced as if spelled *Hrabn.*

h is given its breathing sound.

h *before* VI has the sound of Q, thus,—
Hvitá is pronounced as if spelled *Quee-tow,* O like O in cow.

ll when L is doubled the first L has the sound of T, thus, *fell* is pronounced *fetl.*

ð is sounded like TH in *thin.*

There is a tendency among the uneducated people to lisp or to smother their words behind closed lips. When spoken by an educated person the language is musical and pleasing.

Page 82,—*Family Names*:—The system of nomenclature given in Chapter VII is the prevailing one, still there are a *few* family names in Iceland. This is due to settlers from foreign lands, who have kept their family names and bequeathed them to their children. As an illustration I mention the *Zoëga* family, which, if my informant is correct, came from Italy many years ago.

Page 84,—*Kárastaðir*:—Possibly a more probable derivation of this name lies in the fact that in the early days of the settlement of this portion of the country one of the settlers bore this name, *Kára.* Thus it should be translated, the stead or the farm of *Kára.*

Page 89,—*Öxerá*:—It was not till the summer of 1913, a year after Chapter VII was written, that I learned a most interesting thing about this river so famous in Icelandic history. It seems that in ancient

days the river followed a natural channel near the ridge that rises above the heath near *Kárastaðir.* It did not enter the lake, *Thingvallavatn,* by the way of *Almannagjá* as it does to-day.

The Vikings dispatched *Geitskour* in 965 throughout the country to choose a suitable place for the meeting of the *Althing.* After a summer of travel he chose this sunken valley and named it *Thingvallir.* The Vikings then turned the river from its ancient bed and caused it to tumble into this rift. What joy there must have been in the hearts of those sturdy old fellows as they stood on the opposite wall and watched the torrent make its first plunge into the abyss! Hence *Axe River,* the river whose channel was fashioned by their axes.

Page 92,—*Measuring Stone*:—Various authors have perpetuated the story of this peculiar stone, as given in Chapter VII, that stands in the church yard at *Thingvellir.* They tell us, and so do the guides, that it was the standard of measurement adopted by an ancient *Althing,* from which all linear measures in the country were taken.

Since writing Chapter VII, I have had another opportunity, in 1913, to examine this stone with more care. I emphatically state that it was not made by the hand of man and that the so-called "measuring marks" on it are nothing but steam holes blown through it by the great pressure when the stone was molten and cooling. The stone has been split open and the marks have the appearance of having been placed there by man. To further substantiate this I would refer to the fact that in 1913 Mr. J. C. Angus of York, England, and myself saw numerous blocks of lava in various places at *Mývain* with identical markings. Mr. Angus fully

agrees with me in the above statement about the "measuring stone."

Further, if the people who examine this stone in the future will go around it, examine it on all sides and near the ground they will find actual holes that penetrate deeply into the stone in several places. These have evidently escaped the eyes of those who like to point to this as the "first standard of linear measurement ever prepared by the people of northern Europe." It is a pretty story and affords the guides a lots of amusement,—but *facts are facts*.

Page 104,—*Brúará*:—There is another story differing from the one I gave in Chapter VIII, though that one is correct, relative to the way in which this river received its name of Bridge River. In the old days there was a natural lava arch spanning the stream just below the cite of the present bridge. The story relates that a woman on the side of the river nearest to *Geysir* was widely known for her hospitality. In those days it was the custom of the people to go "guesting" in the autumn and stay until spring. The *Sagas* are replete with such incidents.

At length this good lady became weary because of the large number of her uninvited guests from across the river. She dispatched two of her thralls in the autumn to break down the lava arch. This they did but they both lost their lives in the flood when the arch fell. The natural arch gave this stream the name of Bridge River. The illustration facing page 114 was taken from the present bridge.

Page 134,—*Galtalaekur*:—During the severe earthquake that preceded the eruption of *Hekla* in the latter part of April 1913 these ancient buildings were entirely demolished. It was one of the oldest of

Icelandic turf houses. It has sheltered nearly all the people who have ascended *Hekla* for many generations.

Page 215,—*Skútustaðir*:—This should be derived, not from the Icelandic *skúti*, cave, but from an old Viking who settled here by the name of *Skúti*. I am indebted for this correction to Thorður Floventsson of *Svatákot*.

Page 216,—*Kraká*:—This word is more correctly derived from the Icelandic *Kraká*, the name of a witch. In Chapter XIII I derived it from *kraki*, crow or raven. The following story was related to me in 1913, while struggling along its boggy margin by my guide, Ólafur Eyvindsson.

"There was a witch by the name of *Kraká* who lived in the mountains up the valley. She became angry with a farmer over a piece of fine meadow land which he refused to convey to her under any condition. Thereupon she threatened to destroy it if he did not yield at once. He remained obstinate. Soon a river poured out from the mountains, laid waste the farm and flooded the great meadow, as may be seen to this day, especially if the traveller goes from *Skútustaðir* to *Svatákot*, Black-River-Farm, as we are now doing. In this instance his route will be across *Graenavatn*, Green-Lake."

Graenavatn is a mighty meadow with water over all of it, but so shallow that the grass stands in most places out of the water. It is only along the edge of the river, *Kraká*, where the water has thrown up the black sand, that it is possible for ponies to proceed.

Railway:—I have seen several paragraphs going the rounds of the American press relative to a railroad in Iceland. I had a chance to ride on this railroad in

1913. It is less than two miles in length. It is merely an improvised affair to transport rocks from the quarry to the two great breakwaters that are being built to protect the harbor of *Reykjavik*.

There is some discussion in the *Althing*, (winter of 1914,) about the construction of a railway from *Reykjavik* into the rich grazing land near *Eyrarbakki*. At the present writing nothing definite has been done. It seems that it would be unwise to employ steam and ship the coal from Scotland, when an electric road can be made much more cheaply and there is such an abundance of water power for electricity.

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